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Workers against Lenin: Labour protest and the Bolshevik dictatorship

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To my parents

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Jonathan Aves
Sussex University
March 1996

Note on transliteration and Russian weights and measures

The Library of Congress system of transliteration of the Russian Cyrillic alphabet has been followed throughout except that the soft sign (') has been omitted from the text, although not from the notes and bibliography. Trotsky has been preferred to Trotskii because this is the conventional usage.

1 *pud* = 16.5 kg
1 *funt* = 1/40th *pud* = 0.41kg
1 *vërsta* = 1.06 km
1 *arshin* = 0.71 m

Russian territorial divisions have been translated in the following way.

Guberniia = Province
Raion = District
Uezd = Rural District

Abbreviations

LSR	Left Socialist Revolutionary
NEP	New Economic Policy
NKProd	People's Commissariat for Food Supplies
NKPS	People's Commissariat for Transport
NKTruda	People's Commissariat for Labour
RKI	Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate
RKSP	Worker and Peasant Socialist Party
SNK	Council of People's Commissars
SR	Socialist Revolutionary Party
STO	Council for Labour and Defence
VSNKh	Supreme Council of the National Economy
VTsIK	All-Russian Central Executive Committee
VTsSPS	All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions

Introduction

In March 1921 the Communist Party leadership in Soviet Russia was forced to make a dramatic retreat from its aim of moving rapidly towards building a society based on communist principles. This retreat was brought about by a broad social movement which united peasants, Kronstadt sailors and workers. The challenge posed by this movement was revolutionary in that its demands, if they had been implemented, would have amounted to a fundamental transformation of the economic, social and political character of the Soviet regime. This volume focuses on the part played by workers in this movement, partly because the strikes of early 1921 have not yet been the subject of a historical monograph, but, most importantly, because worker protest represented the most formidable political threat to the communists physically and ideologically. Workers were concentrated in the big cities where mass demonstrations and even armed confrontation would have the greatest impact and, since the Communist Party was formally committed to building a 'workers' state', workers, more than any other social group, were capable of undermining its self-confidence. Indeed, by 1921, the evident hostility of the great mass of workers to the Soviet regime had provoked the deepest divisions in the Communist Party since the debate over the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in early 1918.

The emergence of this revolutionary situation owed little to the activities of opposition political parties but was the unintended consequence of the communists' policies for reconstructing the Russian economy after the Civil War. During the Civil War the communists had sought to mobilize the resources on the territory that they controlled through a massive increase in state intervention in the economy, most notably in the form of the requisitioning of peasant surpluses, reinforced by efforts to control the exchange of goods between town and country by imposing severe restrictions on trade and its replacement by the centralized allocation of rations to workers who, in those

sectors considered vital to the military effort, were tied to their factories. These economic policies were accompanied by an intensification of political repression, particularly against the opposition socialist parties. This regime rapidly became identified with the political project of the Communist Party, not least in the minds of its own leaders. Thus, the effective conclusion of the Civil War at the beginning of 1920 was followed by a more determined and comprehensive attempt to apply these so-called War Communism policies rather than their relaxation.

Chapter 1 of this volume describes how the Communist Party, driven by the utopian vision of a rapid advance towards establishing a society based on communist principles, enthusiastically adopted military methods as a panacea for the reconstruction of Soviet Russia's devastated economy. Despite some dissenting voices, most notably that of Aleksandr Shliapnikov, who sought to convince the Party that progress could only be made if greater initiative was given to enterprises to engage in localized exchange with the villages to procure food supplies for the workforce, these draconian policies were applied with a new determination. Gradually, from the beginning of 1920, the concerted application of military methods to the economy had the effect of uniting groups of workers otherwise divided by different economic interests against the Communist Party.

Chapter 2 describes how campaigns to enforce military forms of labour discipline provoked waves of unrest, particularly amongst workers in those industries which had been given priority by the Communist Party leadership – the munitions industry and the railways. Workers who continued to give consistent support to opposition socialist parties, such as the Moscow printers and bakers, were also singled out for attention. The strikes in these industries were certainly supported by established trade unions, but here, as elsewhere, the basis on which resistance to Communist Party policies was organized was provided by traditional shop-floor sub-cultures and hierarchies which showed a remarkable capacity for surviving the upheavals of the Revolution and Civil War.

The unrest that became endemic amongst workers in Soviet Russia at this time frequently took on a political character. Sometimes this was connected with the activities of opposition socialist activists and communist dissidents, such as the Workers' Opposition, but, more often, it spontaneously grew out of resistance to coercive labour policies

as workers found that basic political rights, such as freedom of speech, were vital if they were to promote their economic rights. Chapter 3 describes how the Communist Party ignored these warning signs and, at the end of 1920, intensified War Communism policies still further. As self-delusion about the country's prospects took hold, a large number of enterprises were re-started and workers drafted in, often by force, to work in them. This ill-considered industrial expansion was accompanied by measures to eliminate local exchange between town and country entirely.

By the beginning of 1921 a revolutionary situation with workers in the vanguard had emerged in Soviet Russia. Worker protest preceded the Kronstadt revolt and had a more direct political impact than the peasant risings which had broken out in various parts of the country the previous year. Chapter 4 describes the simultaneous outbreak of strikes in Petrograd and Moscow and in other industrial regions which have usually been called a *volynka* (go-slow) by Soviet commentators. Although it is difficult to find accurate information there is evidence that there was a degree of conscious organization in the strike movement. Resolutions passed by workers in one city were communicated to their comrades elsewhere. For a brief moment, as in 1917, different groups of workers were united around a coherent set of economic and political demands.

In the economic sphere workers called for an end to the requisitioning of peasant surpluses and for a relaxation in the controls on local exchange between town and country, particularly for the abolition of the trade pickets which stood on the main railway lines and which confiscated grain from workers returning from the countryside. Realizing the weakness of their position in the market, however, they did not demand totally free trade. This reflects the fact, contrary to the claims of Soviet historians, that worker protest was not linked to the 'declassing' of the industrial workforce as a result of its 'dilution' by an influx of peasants during the Civil War. In the political sphere workers demanded that they be granted a wide range of civil rights, most notably freedom of speech and the right to elect candidates from opposition parties to the soviets. On a number of occasions workers demanded that the Constituent Assembly, which the Bolsheviks had disbanded in January 1918, be reconvened.

These strikes provoked an immediate response from the Communist Party leadership. The decision to abolish grain requisitioning, the key

element in the New Economic Policy (NEP) which was approved at the Xth Party Congress in March, was first published at the height of the strikes. As chapter 5 describes, however, the NEP was far from embodying the aspirations raised by the workers' movement in February 1921.

First, contrary to their demands for exchange between town and country to be subject to control, all restrictions on trade between town and country were rapidly removed, leaving workers in a disadvantageous economic position. Secondly, the rapid removal of state controls on the economy and, in particular, the abolition of centrally distributed rations, revealed that different groups of workers had very different economic interests, making it unlikely that workers could co-ordinate their opposition to the Communist Party dictatorship without organized political leadership. Thirdly, integral to the NEP was a political clampdown which deprived workers of an organized political leadership. Opposition socialists parties had been ambivalent in their response to worker protest, but they were suppressed anyway, and workforces were purged of non-Party opposition activists. The Workers' Opposition, which had reflected workers' alienation from the Communist Party leadership was also suppressed and the remaining political autonomy enjoyed by trade unions eliminated.

The workers' movement of February 1921 represented the apotheosis of the demands for the democratization of Russia's political life and society which had been raised so forcefully in 1917. It demonstrated that the desire for democratic reform, articulated both in the form of an unconscious response to the communists' dictatorial methods and a political tradition extending back to 1905, at least, had not disappeared. Whilst it was the unintended consequences of commmunist economic policies which allowed these aspirations to be articulated with such force, it was the unbending determination of the Communist Party leadership to retain an exclusive hold on political power that ensured they would not be realized.

I

The intensification of War Communism, January–September 1920

The militarization of labour

At the beginning of 1920 the Soviet regime inaugurated a grandiose scheme to rebuild Russia's shattered economy and create a society based on communist principles. Although the Civil War appeared to be over, the Communist Party decreed that economic reconstruction should be brought about by an intensification of War Communism policies. Most importantly, this entailed an intensification of grain requisitioning and the state trade monopoly, despite the opposition that these policies had provoked amongst workers and peasants and their failure to satisfy workers' food supply requirements. The continuation of War Communism policies after the military emergency had ended should have been difficult to justify, but the Civil War was an intensely politicized conflict and for a communist to question them made victory sound hollow. The mood of euphoria which gripped the Communist Party after the defeat of the main leaders of the White movement, Kolchak, Denikin and Iudenich, put it on a course leading to conflict with its chosen political constituency – industrial workers.

The Civil War had extorted a terrible cost from the Russian economy. Fighting grew intense at a time when it was already in a state of chronic crisis and it divided the main industrial regions, which were under Communist Party control, from their sources of raw materials, both abroad and elsewhere in the former empire, which were not. All remaining meagre resources were concentrated on the production of munitions. The production of iron and steel fell to almost nothing, the production of cast iron in 1920 was 2.4 per cent of the amount produced in 1913, with the munitions works being fed

mainly with pre-Revolutionary stocks. Metal working enterprises largely gave up the production of new machinery for agriculture and the railways, the production of locomotives in 1920 was 14.8 per cent of the amount produced in 1913 and the production of wagons 4.2 per cent, and locomotive works concentrated on the production of artillery and patching up armoured trains. The textile industry suffered particularly badly since it was cut off from supplies of cotton in Turkestan. The production of cotton yarn in 1920 was 5.1 per cent of the amount produced in 1913.[1] Only the output of uniforms and boots, often from small private workshops, showed any signs of health. Raw materials were much too scarce to be squandered on the production of consumer goods which created further privations for workers and exacerbated relations with the peasantry as even the pretence of an exchange of manufactured goods for foodstuffs was abandoned.

Indicative of the new attention being paid to the tasks of economic reconstruction at the beginning of 1920 is the fact that sixty-nine public decrees were issued by the Soviet government in April 1920 and eighty-three in May, the majority of which were connected with economic questions.[2] Communist Party decisions had set the agenda. On 17 December 1919 Trotsky published an article, 'The Transition to Universal Labour Conscription in Connection with the Militia System', which raised the possibility of using military organizations and personnel for economic tasks in a systematic way.[3] The most important Party decision was embodied in the Central Committee theses, 'On the Mobilization of the Industrial Proletariat, Labour Conscription, Militarization of the Economy and the Application of Military Units for Economic Needs', published in January 1920.[4] These theses were incorporated, and expanded, in the resolution of the IXth Party Congress, 'On Urgent Tasks of Economic Construction', at the beginning of April.[5] Together, these documents amounted to a call for the wholesale application of military methods to Russian industry.

Whilst the early months of 1920 have generally been referred to as a 'peaceful breathing space' in Soviet historiography, they were felt to be much more portentous at the time. In a letter to local Communist Party committees, which laid out the agenda of the IXth Party Congress, the Central Committee underlined the major task they faced.

> Just as until now the party has orientated itself, in the first instance, towards the Civil War, so now it is necessary that the whole party, from top to bottom, orientates itself towards war with the economic crisis

> which, if it is not overcome, will prevent us from taking a step forward. It is necessary that everyone down to the individual party member recognizes the significance of the economic tasks that stand before us and everyone, as one person, starts this work on which depends the future existence, the future fate of building communism in Russia.[6]

The goal of building communism was in stark contrast with the reality that faced ordinary Russians. The year 1919 had been a one of unparalleled horrors for the population. Emma Goldman, the American anarchist, described Petrograd in the spring of 1920. 'The people walked about like living corpses; the shortage of food and fuel was slowly sapping the city and grim death was clutching at its heart.' A worker from the giant Putilov factory told her, 'We are suffering cold and hunger. We have no strength to give more.'[7] In terms of food supply to workers and disease, 1919 was, in some respects, the worst year in the post-revolutionary period and the decline in the size of the Russian industrial workforce reached its apogee at the beginning of 1920. Lenin sometimes appeared to acknowledge the condition of the workers. In his speech to the Third Trade Union Congress he stressed the problems faced by the Communist Party and highlighted a paradox of communist success. 'The proletariat in Russia is not so large now. Its ranks have diminished during the war. Thanks to our victories it has become more difficult for us to run the country.'[8] A similar caution was noted in the introduction to the resolution of the IXth Party Congress, 'On Urgent Tasks of Economic Construction', 'Confirming with satisfaction the undoubted signs of labour enthusiasm in the advance layers of the workers, the congress considers it, however, its duty to warn all local and central institutions of the Soviet Republic against an exaggerated evaluation of the results that have been achieved.'[9]

Such caveats did not imply a slackening in the pace of economic reconstruction, however, and were directed against those communists (such as the supporters of the incipient Workers' Opposition) who hoped that 'comradely' forms of labour discipline could develop quickly, and those trade unionists who hoped for a relaxation in the pressure on workers, and were intended to be a justification for the application of military methods to the economy. Despite the devastation caused by the Civil War, Lenin, like almost all communists in early 1920, believed that Russian workers were ready and able to begin building communism, as he stressed in his speech to the Third Trade

Union Congress, where he underlined the role of the proletariat which had gone through 'the school of labour, the school of training, the discipline of the capitalist factory' as 'organizer' of the economy. Economic construction would be more difficult than winning the Civil War and could be achieved only by 'an upsurge of energy and self-sacrifice'. He continued in this vein, 'Our basic slogan is more and closer to one-man management, more labour discipline. Gird yourself up, work with military decisiveness, resolution and self-sacrifice, putting aside the interests of the group and [factory] shop. All private interests must be sacrificed.'[10]

In his report on economic construction to the IXth Party Congress, Trotsky outlined the priorities for the Soviet economy. The first and most important task was 'an improvement in the conditions of transport, the prevention of its further decline and the procurement of the most elementary stocks of foodstuffs, raw materials and fuel'. Trotsky stressed that, 'All the coming period will be completely taken up with the concentration and exertion of the workforce on the resolution of this task, which is the prerequisite for our future success.' The subsequent tasks, in order of precedence, were: machine-building for transport and obtaining raw materials and foodstuffs; machine-building for the production of consumer goods and finally the production of consumer goods.

Trotsky candidly warned that such a programme offered little to workers in the short term; none the less it was included in the congress resolution, 'On Urgent Tasks of Economic Construction'.[11] Speaking to the Third Trade Union Congress just over a week later, Trotsky again spelt out the consequences of this plan for workers, 'We are unfurling this plan before the country, before the workers and peasants, in order to compel them to understand that in the coming two or three years the situation will be very harsh and that an alleviation of the material lot of workers will only be as a result of the fourth link of this chain.'[12] These objectives were embodied in the first attempts to introduce economic planning. In February Lenin began drawing up his plan for the electrification of the country. The resolution of the IXth Party Congress, 'On Urgent Tasks of Economic Construction', called for a 'single economic plan'. Amidst great fanfares in May, Trotsky issued two orders, No. 1042 and No. 1053, which laid down strict plans for the production and repair of locomotives and wagons, respectively, for the next four years.[13]

No substantive attempt was made to formulate food supply policies capable of satisfying workers' requirements at this time, although the chronic food supply crisis did cause some leading communists to contemplate a change of direction. After his return from the Urals in February, Trotsky proposed the introduction of a grain tax in some areas of the country to the Central Committee but, as John Channon has shown, his ideas did not imply a major break with the policies of War Communism.[14] A. G. Shliapnikov was perhaps the only leading communist who really addressed the question of food supply in the theses he submitted to the January plenum of the Central Committee of the metal workers' trade union. He began by stressing the need to improve supplies to workers. 'One of the powerful means of guaranteeing the high productivity of labour, discipline and the flow of labour into industry is the satisfaction of workers working in production, transport and in the procurement of fuel and raw materials with all kinds of supplies.' He went on to propose that trade unions and co-operatives be given a majority of places in the collegia of all food supply bodies and suggested that enterprises be given the right to manufacture agricultural goods to be used for 'exchange in kind' with the local peasantry.[15]

The move away from the centralized direction of the economy implied by such a practical approach to improving food supplies for workers was not acceptable to most leading communists. Shliapnikov's theses were rejected by the metal workers' trade union plenum and the January theses of the Communist Party Central Committee highlighted the key contribution of labour to economic reconstruction, but stressed the need for 'its organization, its distribution and correct utilization' and made no new major suggestions on the question of food supply. The final section did admit the need for improvements in food supply but did not mark any change in policy. It called for the creation of a 'food reserve' of several hundred million *pudy* of grain, meat, fish and fats, 'Only the creation in the main industrial districts of adequate food bases will give a firm and undoubted guarantee for the realization not only of the immediate economic plan but for the whole of socialist construction in general.' Additionally, an expansion in the system of public canteens was proposed. Since public canteens were very often situated at the place of work it was hoped that they would 'create the most effective form of public control over the participation of citizens in production', as well as permit more women to enter production.[16]

Two decrees were issued to improve the system of supplying food to workers but they were both half-hearted and showed signs of compromise. On 23 March the Council of People's Commissars (SNK) approved 'General Regulations on Bonuses'. In essence this decree would have permitted enterprises to create their own wages funds in addition to those supplied centrally, but it failed to allow enterprises real initiative at the local level as Shliapnikov had proposed. It even represented a retreat from Trotsky's early draft for the resolution, 'On Urgent Tasks of Economic Construction', which had envisaged measures excluded from the adopted version that would have allowed enterprises to produce goods for exchange with the local population. The approved decree proposed that workers receive bonuses for production above a norm which could be set at as much as fifty per cent below the technical norm of his or her machinery as a concession to the prevailing dilapidation. The enterprise's bonus fund was to be built up as a result of savings made from the bonus system and, to set the ball rolling, enterprises were promised credits.[17] The limited nature of the scheme is clear and it was completely ineffective. Credits were not forthcoming and the calculation of bonuses left plenty of room for abuses. A new decree had to be drawn up and was approved in October.

A decree which would base the rationing system on the type of work carried out (the so-called labour ration) rather than on social class (the so-called class ration) was approved by the SNK on 30 April 1920. Lenin's draft proposal to abolish the basic ration and to exclude gradually all those not working in state enterprises from any call on state food supplies was not embodied in the adopted decree. In theory this would have greatly increased the resources available for those working in state enterprise who, Lenin envisaged, would receive a ration strictly according to the type of work they carried out. The final version set out three categories of the population with those working in private enterprises, but not employing labour, receiving the lowest priority, followed by, in ascending order, those engaged in soviet administration and those engaged in physical labour in soviet enterprises. This was only a minor change from the existing system. Furthermore, the main stated aim of the decree 'to establish greater uniformity in the distribution of foodstuffs amongst the labouring population', which Lenin's original proposal had aimed to achieve by bringing workers in 'shock' enterprises and sectors such as transport within the rationing system, was watered down so that the adopted

version allowed 'special supply norms' for those employed in such enterprises and also for highly qualified specialists. Resistance to a reduction in the scope of the rationing system came from both central and local food supply bodies and the introduction of the new rationing system was postponed in Moscow until September.[18]

Without an improvement in the system of food procurement even such half-hearted attempts to improve food supplies were bound to remain a dead letter. The inability of the Communist Party leadership to appreciate the necessity of providing the workforce with material incentives was reflected in the failure to present the IXth Party Congress with a specific resolution on the subject. The congress resolution, 'On Urgent Tasks of Economic Construction', although also concerned with the problem of procuring raw materials, reiterated the general lines of the January theses with new stress on the need to give transport, the most important enterprises and the initiation of a system of bonuses priority for food supplies. The trend towards greater centralization was also reflected in a decision to enforce the closer subordination of the consumer co-operatives to the state supply apparatus. A great deal more Communist Party enthusiasm was stirred up by the decision to declare May Day an All-Russian *subbotnik*, effectively the transformation of a traditional workers' holiday into a day of compulsory unpaid overtime, than questions of food supply.[19]

Coercion, instead of material incentives, became the main instrument for raising labour productivity. The roots of this decision grew partly out of a powerful mood of optimism fuelled by victory in the Civil War and hopes for international revolution. This atmosphere of optimism was so strong it even played a part in the political strategy of non-Bolsheviks and led to a sharp leftwards turn in official Menshevik Party thinking in April. The Communist Party attitude towards workers began to betray a strong element of self-delusion. Communists genuinely seem to have believed their own propaganda and that resolutions passed by workers' meetings in support of Communist Party economic policies, clearly under pressure or threats, would be converted into real commitment and the achievement of economic goals.

The experience of the Civil War was one factor predisposing communists towards applying military methods to the economy in early 1920 but ideological considerations were also important. Bolsheviks had fixed ideas of what constituted 'working class consciousness' and tended to ascribe the strategies workers had devised to survive the

conditions created by the Civil War to their low cultural level, thus justifying the use of coercion against 'the backward part of the proletariat', as Lenin put it.[20] All the same, Lenin avoided becoming too closely identified with the general enthusiasm for military methods and concentrated his attention on the campaign to bolster the powers of managers (the so-called system of one-man management). Trotsky, on the other hand, had consistently stressed the peasant roots of Russian workers and this now became the justification for a hierarchical, coercive system of labour discipline.

> In its mass the working class which has come out of the peasantry is lacking in initiative. This personal initiative, personal principle must be inculcated in workers. The personal principle of the bourgeoisie is the individualism of competition but with the working class it is the personal principle of solidarity and fraternal co-operation. But solidarity cannot depend on the lack of personality, on the herd instinct. Our Russian peasant is sick with the herd instinct, with the thing that our reactionary populism hymned.[21]

Trotsky argued that laziness should be regarded as an integral part of human nature, implying that coercive labour discipline would be the feature of even a communist society. At the IXth Party Congress Trotsky began his report on economic construction with a robust statement of this view.

> We are organizing, or are beginning to organize, labour on new socialist principles. If our past society consisted of the compulsory organization of labour in the interests of a minority, furthermore compulsion extended by the minority to the overwhelming majority of workers, then we are making the first attempt in world history to organize labour in the interests of the majority. But this, naturally, does not mean the elimination of an element of compulsion. The element of obligation is not to be withdrawn from the accounts of history. No, compulsion plays and will yet play a large role for a significant historical period. As a general rule man tries to avoid work. It could be said that man is a rather lazy creature and the task of social organization consists of confining laziness within limits in order to discipline and fasten it with the help of the social organization of labour.[22]

Communists frequently expressed such views. N. A. Semashko, the People's Commissar for Health, wrote in early 1920 that Soviet institutions did not work badly because of bureaucratic attitudes but because of what is usually called 'Russian laziness'. In an article on bad labour

discipline in the Tula railway workshops in 1920 the following piece of folk wisdom coming from a non-Party worker was quoted approvingly in the Communist Party press. 'Can you deal with my brother without a firm hand? After all the majority are lacking in consciousness and are accustomed to work under the threat of a stick.'[23] A readiness to resort to coercion against 'backward' workers was reinforced by a surge in utopian expectations. In a speech at the IXth Party Congress, N. A. Bukharin's advocacy of coercion was pure utopianism:

> The comrades who speak against this do not see that militarization is nothing other than the self-organization of the working class and the organization by the working class of other similar classes. They completely miss these things! For us militarization is not self-strangulation, for us it is self-organization and this is exactly why we support it and for no other reason!

At the Third Trade Union Congress Trotsky echoed this utopian stand. After attributing opposition to militarization to the mensheviks, who formed a significant group at the congress, he called on workers 'to organize your labour according to the new principles of the state setting wage rates and general-collective compulsion'.[24]

The adoption of coercive labour policies was also connected with Trotsky's political ambitions. Whilst supporting measures that extended the influence of his main power base, the Red Army, in February and March Trotsky also showed some support for economic policies that moderated the War Communism line: the localized introduction of a tax in kind and localized exchange between enterprises and peasants. Then, in March, after he had been appointed People's Commissar for Transport, he began to support more coercive labour policies. His draft resolution, 'On Urgent Tasks of Economic Construction', written at the end of February, did not include any mention of planning but, by May, he was the enthusiastic supporter of an economic plan which gave the railways top priority. By June 1920 Iu. O. Martov, the main Menshevik Party leader, was describing him as the candidate for 'economic dictator'.[25] Trotsky's political advance inevitably led to greater prestige for military institutions and military personnel and the spread of their influence into the wider economic sphere. Even though Trotsky advocated the most draconian policies, swathed in the glory of his Civil War victories, he was able to gain at least superficial approval for his views.

War Communism policies were now regarded as a panacea for the

country's economic problems. The major issues affecting the industrial workforce were identified in the January theses of the Central Committee. They proposed that an improvement in the organization of labour was the prerequisite for successful economic reconstruction. The first task was the gathering of 'the dispersed ranks of skilled and trained workers by means of the systematic extraction of them (as the situation permits) from the army, food detachments, civilian soviet institutions, including state farms and communes, from the rural handicraft industry, from the villages and, in the first instance, from the ranks of speculation [traders]'. This was to be achieved by improvements in the material position of workers but also by 'the organizational pressure' of trade unions and, where necessary, 'measures of state compulsion'. The theses confirmed previous laws establishing labour conscription which 'must now find a wide and thorough implementation in practice', including the full introduction of labour books. Local Commissions for Labour Conscription, consisting of representatives of local military organizations and soviet bodies and labour departments, were to be organized with a Main Committee for Labour Conscription at the centre. The theses also outlined the purpose of militarization. 'Military force' was the main weapon in the state armoury and would now be applied to the economy of the transition period in the form of labour conscription. The whole population must be made to understand that 'the abolition of all forms of labour desertion and selfishness, bad time-keeping at work, slovenliness, idleness and abuses is a question of life and death for the whole country and must be achieved in the shortest possible time even by the most severe measures'. These theses were embodied in the resolution, 'On Urgent Tasks of Economic Construction', which also included a section on 'labour desertion' which proposed that 'punishment labour detachments' and 'concentration camps' be used against defaulters.[26]

On 3 February 1920 two decrees which gave expression to these priorities were approved by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) and SNK. The first set out measures designed to give labour conscription 'the wide and thorough implementation' proposed in the January theses. It called for skilled workers to be brought back into production and set up Committees for Labour Conscription at the centre and at the local level. These committees had the power to hand over those workers who tried to evade labour conscription to revolutionary tribunals. They were also given the right to punish less

important breaches of labour discipline administratively, including the punishment of culprits in labour units or their imprisonment for one or two weeks. The second decree set out detailed regulations for the establishment of the Committees for Labour Conscription.[27]

After the IXth Party Congress, on 27 April, a general decree, 'On the Struggle with Absenteeism', was approved. This obliged those holding responsible posts in enterprises to exercise strict supervision of the time when a worker clocked on with Commissions for Labour Conscription, carrying out 'flying inspections' and, together with factory committees, supervising the carrying out of the decree. Those going absent without a valid reason were, from now on, to be considered 'deserters' and were liable to lose part of their bonus in kind as well as pay and were obliged to make up lost time. Those going absent for more than three days were to be punished by labour disciplinary courts for 'sabotage' and those failing to make up time lost sentenced to imprisonment in a concentration camp.[28]

With the Civil War over Lenin forcefully raised the introduction of one-man management which re-opened questions within the Communist Party that went to the heart of its vision of a future communist society. One-man management not only implied a rejection of 'comradely' forms of labour discipline, but also became caught up with the new militaristic style of management which was constantly called for in party, government and trade union documents. Often commissars fresh from the Red Army were drafted into management positions in the factories. When commissars and specialists were being granted new disciplinary powers, the introduction of one-man management was bound to provoke unrest amongst workers. One-man management also threatened the predominant influence in economic decision-making which the trade unions had built up during the Civil War, since it involved the abandonment of any element of election by workers in the appointment of managers who were now to be selected solely according to their qualifications and experience. Trade union opposition, combined with the long-standing hostility to specialists amongst workers, created a powerful coalition against one-man management.

Trotsky's proposals to set up Labour Armies, whose controlling councils would virtually run a region's economy, threatened to establish a completely new economic apparatus based on the military in which the trade unions would play no role. Of more immediate concern to trade unionists was the decision to increase the power of political

departments on the railways, which had grown out of their militarization at the end of 1918. A VTsIK decree at the beginning of February laid down that their central co-ordinating organ, Glavpolitput, should be strengthened 'primarily with officials who had worked successfully in the Red Army'.[29] The political departments were hybrid bodies; state organs with political responsibilities. The resolution, 'On Urgent Tasks of Economic Construction', devoted a whole section to Glavpolitput whose main task was to strengthen the railway workers' trade union in order to establish 'iron discipline' in its organization. As Robert Service has pointed out, the Communist Party leadership had effectively 'resolved to suspend the traditional rights of trade unions in key sectors'.[30] The appointment of special representatives with wide powers from military supply organizations to relevant enterprises increased the fears of trade unionists. In response I. I. Kutuzov, leader of the textile workers' trade union and future signatory of the theses of the Workers' Opposition, accused Trotsky of wanting to 'disband workers' organizations' and put enterprises under the control of 'military specialists'.[31] Trade union opposition to these measures therefore partly stemmed from their desire to defend their own bureaucratic interests but, by expressing their opposition in terms of concern for workers' material well-being and hostility to specialists, they touched on genuinely popular aspirations.

There were a few trade unionists who welcomed Trotsky's approach. A. Z. Goltsman was one of these. In an article in *Pravda* he called for the 'technical organizational' functions of production to be handed over to 'industrial high commands'.[32] However, Goltsman was an exception and the majority of trade unionists, led by M. P. Tomskii, the chairman of the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS), were united in opposing the new labour policies. Twice Lenin put the issue of one-man management to the Communist Party fraction of the VTsSPS and twice it was rejected. Eventually, it approved theses drawn up by Tomskii which would have allowed the introduction of one-man management only in exceptional circumstances.[33] Tomskii defended the existing system of collegiate management on the basis of the need for workers, through trade unions, to supervise the work of specialists. In debate with Bukharin, who was a leading ideologist of War Communism, in March, he was reported to have opposed one-man management strongly and recommended caution in the employment of specialists.[34] At the IXth Party Congress he explained, 'We consider it expedient to

accustom specialists to work with workers in a collegium, in a comradely atmosphere. We consider it imperative that between them and the workers there is a living bond which will be attained when the specialist and the collegium consider themselves colleagues.'[35]

The IXth Party Congress approved the introduction of one-man management but the final resolution shows signs of compromise. The section of the resolution, 'On Urgent Tasks of Economic Construction', dealing with one-man management was a watered-down version of Trotsky's draft which, in this respect at least, had received the unreserved support of Lenin. Trotsky's draft had called for one-man management to be applied at all levels of the economic apparatus whereas the final resolution called for the application of 'full and unconditional' one-man management only at the shop level, progress towards it at factory management level and reductions in the size of collegia higher up. Trotsky's caveat that collegia were only to be retained in 'exceptional circumstances' in factory managements was dropped.[36] The eventual resolution on one-man management did not propose the comprehensive introduction of one-man management but rather various combinations of specialist directors and worker assistants or vice versa but, even so, it was implemented reluctantly by the trade unions.

This intensification of War Communism labour policies would not have been a significant development if they had continued to be applied in the same haphazard manner as in 1919, but in early 1920 the Communist Party leadership was no longer distracted by the Civil War from concentrating its thoughts and efforts on the formulation and implementation of its labour policies. Indeed, the euphoria of victory strengthened its belief in the correctness of its war-time labour policies and its determination to see them through. The war with Poland, which broke out at the end of April, again diverted attention from general economic reconstruction, and caused efforts to be focused on the production of munitions, but the Soviet regime was now solidly established within Russia and the mobilization for the war effort was not as disruptive in 1920 as it had been in 1919. Thus, the apogee of the War Communism economy occurred after the Civil War was effectively over and the coercive labour policies that went with it began to place serious constraints on the strategies which workers had devised to survive harsh economic conditions without providing an effective substitute in the form of adequate rations. An increase in tension between the Communist Party and workers was the inevitable result.

Political opposition

At the same time as Communist Party labour policy was becoming more uncompromising, there was a perceptible relaxation in the hostility of some Bolsheviks to the opposition socialist parties. The optimistic mood of early 1920, when hopes for political relaxation received some encouragement, stands in direct contrast with the disillusionment of early 1921 when Lenin argued that workers, who were no more demoralized than they were in early 1920, had become 'declassed' in order to justify a political clamp-down. In a gesture that was highly charged with symbolism, the death penalty was abolished in early 1920, although the mass executions carried out by the Cheka on the eve of the decree's promulgation did not augur well.[37] Executions continued during 1920. Political repression had been justified by the exigencies of the Civil War and its end naturally raised the hopes of opposition socialists. This was reflected in an optimistic speech made by D. Iu. Dallin, a leading menshevik, at the opening of the Third Trade Union Congress in April 1920. 'Now,' he said, 'the whole Russian working class is united on revolutionary soil and is able to get down to its real business the construction of economic life.' Peace would allow a more conciliatory attitude towards the peasantry, more emphasis on workers' creativity in production and the abolition of the 'system of repressions and terror'.[38]

The Socialist Revolutionary Party (SR) Central Committee made an attempt, in the spring of 1920, to unite the party around the principle of a rejection of armed opposition to the communists. However, the Central Committee members could not reach an agreement on tactics and one faction, headed by I. Z. Shteinberg, the former People's Commissar for Justice, split away to form their own organization, which went by the name SR(Minority), to pursue a consistent policy of working within the Soviet constitution.[39] This grouping was able to achieve limited electoral success amongst workers in early 1920. The left tendency in the Menshevik Party Central Committee reached its apogee in the spring of 1920. Carried away by hopes of revolution in Germany, the party withdrew from the Second International. The party conference in April saw the approval by Martov of theses which confirmed the rejection of the Constituent Assembly, which had been disbanded by the Bolsheviks in January 1918, and recognized the dictatorship of the proletariat as 'the political form of the transition

period to socialism'. These theses rejected the militarization of labour but agreed that trade unions should take on some managerial functions. The conference also agreed to reject alliances with non-Party activists in trade unions who were usually more hostile to the communists than the mensheviks. Some leading mensheviks, such as O. A. Ermanskii and L. M. Khinchuk, joined the communists and further expulsions of those who opposed the left line, from the right, were made.[40] The Menshevik Party Central Committee was true to its new line and when Poland invaded Ukraine at the end of April, it hurried to proclaim its loyalty to the Communist Party government and ordered the mobilization of its members. When the communists made May Day a *subbotnik*, the Menshevik Party Central Committee called on all workers to participate.[41]

Some local Communist Party organizations responded to peace by allowing the opposition socialist parties greater room for manoeuvre and a small revival in their fortunes took place at the local level. When delegations from the Menshevik Party Central Committee had visited Tula, Briansk and Tver in November 1919 they found their local organizations in a state of decrepitude. In Tula, after strikes in the spring of 1919, local activists had been arrested and the party had ceased to operate openly and was now run by an illegal commission of three members. Similarly, in Briansk, police repression had made it impossible for mensheviks to operate openly for several months before the Central Committee delegation visited the town, and their links with the workers had weakened. The visits of the Central Committee delegations aided the revival of Menshevik Party activity in some localities. In Tula the Central Committee delegation extracted a promise that the local Menshevik Party organization would be 'legalized' and, as we shall see, the official attitude towards them did relax.[42] Taking advantage of this situation, the mensheviks, who had suffered less than the SRs from splits, were able to secure the election of blocs of delegates to a number of local soviets.

Samara was one city where a Menshevik Party revival occurred. In January the provincial soviet executive committee agreed to a request from the local Menshevik Party organization that party members who accepted the line of their Central Committee on working within the Soviet constitution should be allowed to return to Samara without being persecuted for participation in the anti-bolshevik Komuch government which had existed in the town at the end of 1918. The

mensheviks rapidly gained a strong position in the local printers' trade union and equal representation with the bolsheviks at its first provinical conference in February. Mensheviks who had returned from White-controlled Siberia were reported as being involved in agitation at the time of the strikes which broke out in March.[43] However, the most dramatic example of such a relaxation in communist attitudes occurred in Tula.

In an article in *Pravda* in March 1920, N. Osinskii, who was in Tula as a representative of VTsIK, wrote the following, 'Our party organization set itself in this [election] campaign completely different tasks from those set in Moscow. We decided not to go for an exclusively Communist Party soviet.' He reported that the local party, whilst ensuring a Communist Party majority, wanted to draw in as many non-Party delegates as possible 'to make it business-like and, in this way, doubly tie it to the masses'. In a breach with normal practice, a secret ballot was allowed in some cases. Osinskii was also a leading member of the opposition Democratic Centralist faction in the Communist Party and so was possibly disposed to be more tolerant towards opposition parties, particularly since a revival of the soviets was its main preoccupation.[44]

On Thursday 12 March 1920 a meeting of 9000 workers was held at the Tula Armaments works which Osinskii described in his *Pravda* article as an 'old nest of Menshevism'. First three communists, Osinskii, A. Kaminskii and Arsentev, addressed the workers and then one leading local menshevik, V. D. Nikolau. Nikolau accused the Communist Party of encouraging the spread of bureaucratic attitudes and suppressing workers' creativity. He called for the local soviet to be granted greater autonomy. Soviet elections at the nearby Ammunition works were held on Saturday 15 March. Here twenty-six communist, eight non-Party and five menshevik delegates were elected. The five mensheviks were elected from the cannon-instrument, mechanical and oil supply workshops; all 'cold shops' where skilled workers were concentrated. Amongst those elected were the leading local mensheviks, Nikolau and N. G. Brigadirov.[45]

The elections at the Armaments works were held on Monday 16 March and Tuesday 17 March. An enormous meeting of all 15,000 workers was reportedly held. Proceedings began with speeches by three communists, with Kaminskii the best received. After his speech a third of those present left, not waiting for the menshevik speaker who was

nevertheless received with loud applause. He said that the bolsheviks had laid the groundwork for the Revolution but had led the masses into a 'utopian dead-end'. He attacked the Communist Party food supply policies, the Cheka, the one-party dictatorship and corruption. Finally, he called on the masses to 'take the soviets into their hands'. The opposition mood was strong amongst non-Party workers. In one shop a non-Party speaker gave an ironic explanation as to why workers should not elect communists. 'I want to say, comrades, whom we should elect. We shouldn't elect communists, we should leave them here with us. They tell us from the offices and committees what to do. So be it, let them stay with us now. They are cleverer than us so let them teach us what we should be; let them live with us for a while. We'll send others to the soviet.' The Armaments works elected fourteen communist, eight menshevik, six non-Party and two SR(Minority) delegates. The mensheviks were elected by the barrel and machine-gun No. 2 shops. Again, these were 'cold shops'. The SRs were elected by office employees.[46]

Elsewhere in Tula, mensheviks were elected by the canteen workers' trade union and the chemical workers' trade union. The Tula railway repair workshops elected six non-Party delegates and no communists which gives some indication of the political mood here on the eve of the arrival of a commission to investigate poor labour discipline. The final tally for the town soviet was 238 communist, forty-five menshevik, two SR(Minority), four anarchist and eighty-six non-Party delegates.[47] Although the communists had a unassailable majority, the mensheviks had a platform for their views.

In Moscow Menshevik Party successes in the February soviet elections were modest. The election of delegates from the printers was especially hard fought. A claim by the leading menshevik, A. A. Troianovskii, at one election meeting, that the Red Army had sacked the workers' quarter of Rostov on Don when it captured the city, was seized on by the communist press as evidence of Menshevik Party sympathy for the Whites. In all, the mensheviks had twenty-nine delegates elected, mainly from printers in the city district. It is quite probable that they enjoyed greater support than their number of delegates suggested. Speeches by menshevik leaders such as R. A. Abramovich and F. I. Dan at the opening session of the new soviet at the beginning of March were received with applause which led to accusations in the communist press of disloyalty to the Red Army and advocacy of 'free labour'.[48]

The Communist Party fraction of the Moscow trade union council proved more tolerant than the Communist Party delegates in the Moscow Soviet and it allowed the mensheviks to retain and strengthen their hold on the local boards of the printers' and chemical workers' trade unions. In the autumn of 1919 elections to the printers' board, which had twenty-five members, produced only six or seven communists with most of the rest mensheviks. As early as January 1918 G. N. Melnichanskii, the Moscow trade union council chairman, had failed to persuade the council to take action against the printers' board. In January 1919 the Moscow Soviet passed a resolution urging the trade union council to disband the printers' board, but it was slow and half-hearted in taking action. The presence of Krol, the chairman of the food processing workers' trade union, who held particularly liberal views on the Moscow trade union council, may have been important in the survival of the Moscow bakers' section of the union which was dominated by the radical Maximalist faction of the SRs and anarchists. Tomskii was also a moderating influence. In the autumn of 1918 he had restrained Melnichanskii from taking action against the non-bolshevik office workers' union.[49]

Menshevik successes in soviet elections were reported from Smolensk and Kremenchug and especially from Kharkov in Ukraine where 200 mensheviks were elected. The newly captured territory of the Donbass, also in Ukraine, was a Menshevik Party stronghold. Most of the seventy menshevik delegates to the Third Trade Union Congress came from here. At the congress a menshevik delegate boasted of his party's strength in the metal workers' trade union and the textile workers' trade union in Ukraine when they had not enjoyed real representation in their Russian equivalents since 1917.[50] In early 1920 mensheviks still controlled the Donbass mine workers' trade union, Gornotrud.[51]

If the mensheviks in Moscow attempted, with limited success, to conduct open agitation in early 1920, many SRs in the city worked in 'the underground'. The SRs retained small groups of activists in such large metal-working enterprises as the Guzhon works and the Bromlei works and also retained support amongst railway workers. In early April 1920 an attempt by the Moscow SR committee to put out a journal specifically aimed at railway workers was halted by the Cheka. Anarchists conducted open agitation in Moscow and had support amongst bakers and railway workers. The Vindinavskaia railway elected two anarchists to the Moscow Soviet in February 1920.[52]

The position of the opposition socialist parties was reversed in Petrograd. The mensheviks had negligible representation in the Petrograd Soviet, two delegates in December 1919 and five in June 1920. This was partly because, in contrast to Moscow, the local Communist Party leadership was particularly intolerant and partly because the right wing was stronger in the Petrograd Menshevik Party organization. In contradiction to their declared opposition to the Soviet constitution, however, right-wing mensheviks did put up candidates in soviet elections. In July 1919 a right-wing faction loyal to the memory of the late Menshevik Party leader, Giorgii Plekhanov, called Unity, had three delegates in the soviet. Despite their participation in violent strikes in the spring of 1919, the Bolsheviks allowed an SR(Minority) organization to operate. In December 1919 they had ten delegates in the local soviet. In the June 1920 elections the SR(Minority) gained an increase in its representation to seventeen delegates, elected by major metal-working enterprises, the Aleksandrovskii locomotive building works, the Obukhovskii works, the Metallicheskii works and the Rechkin works.[53]

In some respects the Menshevik Party revival in early 1920 was more apparent than real since a large part of it was accounted for by Ukrainian cities, such as Kharkov and Kiev, which were traditional strongholds and which had only recently been occupied by the Red Army. In Russian towns, such as Tver, there was no revival. In the summer of 1919, during the 'hungry months', Tver enterprises had elected delegates, described as 'hostile to the Communist Party', to soviet and trade union bodies. However, at the end of 1919, after the departure of the Menshevik Party Central Committee delegation, when local activists tried to hold further meetings, they met with harassment and arrests. *Pravda* reported that workers in Tver were showing greater sympathy towards the Communist Party at this time, flatly contradicting menshevik claims, and noted that mensheviks and Internationalists (a group set up by S. A. Lozovskii, a temporary defector from the Communist Party) had lost their positions on the Tver trade union council.[54]

Contrary to Communist Party claims both the Menshevik and SR (Minority) parties were anxious to display loyalty towards the Soviet regime as part of their desire to be recognized as legitimate opposition parties. Groups of workers which were involved in industrial action often showed support for opposition political groups even though there

is little evidence that they encouraged strikes. When unrest broke out amongst workers where mensheviks enjoyed influence, they usually tried to play a mediating role. Menshevik tactics will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter but this generalization certainly holds true as far as the Tula mensheviks and the Menshevik Party-led Moscow printers' trade union were concerned. It was also the case in Samara where, judging by the number of reports of defections to the Communist Party, the left wing dominated the local Menshevik Party organization. However, the opposition socialist parties were a convenient scapegoat for industrial unrest and their position was always under threat from the authorities.

Opposition parties that tried to work within the Soviet constitution also faced the twin problems of worker alienation and political polarization. Workers frequently voted for opposition parties, not because they supported their policies but simply to register their general alienation from the Communist Party, whilst those workers who were politically active and had rejected the Communist Party had also usually rejected moderate positions. For example, at the Tula works, during the soviet election campaign, some workers called for popular power (*narodovlastie*), the Constituent Assembly and changes in the food supply policy, demands which went beyond official Menshevik Party positions. Martov summed up his party's dilemma at the beginning of 1920.

> Insofar as we did act we ran into the lamentable situation which any party finds itself in during an intense civil war if it propounds 'moderate ideas' against fanatics and sectarians. We had a sympathetic audience, but it always turned out to be much more rightist than us. Following a healthy instinct, all those who felt crushed by Bolshevism gladly supported us as the boldest fighters against it. But they took in only what they needed – only the critical exposure of Bolshevism. So long as we branded Bolshevism, we were applauded; as soon as we went on to say that a changed regime was needed to fight Denikin successfully, to eliminate speculation and facilitate the victory of the international proletariat over reaction, our audience turned cold or even hostile. We did not have our *own* masses of the proletariat and revolutionary intelligentsia. That is, we had only their old decimated cadres. The new, younger elements, who have come to politics only now, are either irresistibly drawn into the Communist Party camp – which, with the aid of a huge state apparatus, puts hundreds of tentacles around the life of the young, the women, the non-partisan workers – or, despite their proletarian origin, [these younger

elements] are drawn into the camp of reaction, which rejects, along with Bolshevism, all socialism.[55]

There was a potential constituency for the opposition socialist parties, but the problems they faced more than outweighed the opportunities. The problems of political alienation and polarization amongst workers, however, were minor compared to the impact of Communist Party repression: the closure of the opposition press, the harassment and destruction of organizations and the arrest and imprisonment of activists. The Communist Party leadership made no concessions to demands for political liberalization in early 1920. After Dallin's speech at the Third Trade Union Congress Lenin linked such aspirations with capitalist elements amongst the peasantry, 'Speeches about equality, freedom and democracy in the present circumstances are nonsense. We are carrying on a class struggle and our goal is the abolition of classes.'[56]

The Menshevik Party revival of early 1920 turned out to depend on the unreliable goodwill of friendly bolsheviks, and opposition socialist parties were obvious scapegoats for any tension in relations between the Communist Party and workers. The outbreak of war with Poland provided the pretext hard-line communists had been waiting for to advocate a general crack-down. After Abramovich, who was a delegate of the Prokhorovskaia textile mill to the Moscow Soviet, proposed a resolution to a meeting of workers that linked victory in the war to a change in food supply policies, a campaign was mounted against him which led to his soviet mandate being withdrawn.[57] The summer of 1920 saw mass arrests of mensheviks and the destruction of their organizations. Not long after the establishment of Communist Party rule in Kharkov and the Donbass, the strong Menshevik Party presence there was suppressed. Also, the printers' union board in Moscow, which was a major Menshevik Party stronghold, was disbanded and its leadership arrested in the summer, as were the SR(Minority) delegates to the Petrograd Soviet. Even after the summer of 1920, however, many opposition socialists, such as the official Menshevik Party organization and the SR(Minority), continued to argue that the Soviet constitution allowed room for opposition socialist parties to operate openly and that Communist Party repression could be explained by the emergency conditions of the Civil War.

For their part, the intensification of coercive labour policies in early

1920 posed dilemmas for communist trade unionists. First, the new policies encroached on areas, such as the selection of managers, which had become their prerogative. Secondly, the Communist Party's worker roots were most apparent in its trade unionists since they were almost all ex-workers themselves and still strongly identified Soviet rule with a better life for workers. In early 1920 they found themselves having to force policies on workers which clearly paid little attention to their needs and which provoked great hostility As a result, communist trade unionists began to assert demands for greater autonomy from the state and, more controversially, from the Communist Party. To an extent this was the continuation of a controversy about the extent to which trade unions should be absorbed into the state apparatus (so-called statization), which had been agreed in principle at the First Trade Union Congress in January 1918. The new labour policies sharpened tensions between the Communist Party leadership and trade unionists when the experience of carrying out important economic tasks in the emergency conditions of 1918–19 had created sharp divisions amongst the latter. The embryonic Workers' Opposition view, expressed by Shliapnikov, Iu. K. Lutovinov and Kutuzov, was that trade unions should take on greater economic functions to further the interests of workers, whilst more moderate communist trade union leaders such as Tomskii and Lozovskii (after he re-joined the Communist Party in 1920) and, most stridently, D. Riazanov argued that the principal task of trade unions was to obtain better material conditions for workers and that taking on managerial functions would make this more difficult.

Almost all leading trade unionists favoured greater autonomy, though. Shliapnikov was credited with influencing the approval by the VTsSPS of a resolution entitled, 'Regulations on Communist Party Fractions in the VTsSPS', in December 1919, which had asserted the right of the VTsSPS and not local Communist Party committees to exert party discipline on communists working in the trade unions. This view was unacceptable to the party leadership but the IXth Party Congress resolution did not clarify the position: 'All party fractions [in trade unions] are part of the local organization subordinated to the party committee', it read, but continued, 'all VTsSPS decrees affecting the conditions and organization of labour are binding on a trade union organization and equally for all party members working in them and cannot be revoked by any party organization except for the Communist Party Central Committee.'[58] The degree to which trade union decisions

could be overruled by local party organizations continued to be a major bone of contention until it was resolved in favour of the party committees in the summer of 1921.

Before the IXth Party Congress Shliapnikov had put forward theses entitled, 'On the Question of Relations between the Communist Party, Soviets and Production Unions', which represented the embryonic Workers' Opposition's stance on the necessity for trade unions to take responsibility for carrying out economic functions. Shliapnikov's theses gave the Communist Party control over political matters, with the soviets described as the 'single form of political power', whilst trade unions were to be the 'only responsible organizers of the economy and schools of management'. The assigning of sole responsibility for running the economy to trade unions led to accusations of 'syndicalism' from the more moderate trade unionists.

Divisions between trade unionists became clearly apparent at the IXth Party Congress after Tomskii withdrew his right to oppose Bukharin and the Central Committee's theses on trade unions, possibly because of the concessions on one-man management, and Riazanov stepped in. He baldly stated that trade union tasks did not include 'the organization of the workforce'. Their job rather was to 'take responsibility for the workforce, to attend to its protection, its education, to attend to improving its qualifications'. In reply Lutovinov accused him of 'shouting at the top of his voice at meetings of the Communist Party fraction of the VTsSPS and the Moscow party committee about the defence of the interests of the proletariat' and of wanting to 'resurrect' the question of independent trade unions.[59]

The outlines of the trade union debate, which broke out later in the year, were already apparent in the early part of 1920. The moderates represented a cautious view of the speed with which Soviet Russia was advancing towards a communist society and, assuming the continued existence of a class society, advocated that trade unions should retain a degree of autonomy in order to represent the sectional interests of workers. Their views also implied a low estimation of the ability of Russian workers to take on managerial tasks. The incipient Workers' Opposition represented a completely different perspective. It took an optimistic view both of the possibility for advance towards a communist society, where non-state organizations such as trade unions would administer the economy, and of the capacity of workers to take on managerial functions. So, although almost all trade union leaders

wanted greater autonomy from the Communist Party and the state, they were fatally divided amongst themselves.

The conflict between the Communist Party leadership and trade unionists was given new impetus by Trotsky's plans for Tsekprofsozh, the railway workers' trade union. At the beginning of July an intense debate began in the pages of *Gudok*, the railway workers' newspaper, about proposals emanating from Glavpolitput for the reorganization of the union that were to be put to its congress in the middle of the month. The Glavpolitput proposals were aimed at making the railway administration a strictly centralized affair, staffed by commissars and specialists, and so able to operate free from trade union interference, and suggested reorganizing the trade union on a line basis so its apparatus matched that of the administration and was therefore more capable of carrying out management functions. Tsekprofsozh rejected the Glavpolitput proposals and insisted that the task of trade unions was to assist management rather than manage itself. Its work should be focused on the needs of railway workers and should consist of improving incentives to encourage them to work better and the selection of workers for promotion to management positions. Tsekprofsozh was supported by local trade union committees, including both the Moscow and Petrograd districts.[60]

The Tsekprofsozh congress opened on 17 July. After the opening report by the union leadership, the congress section on organization approved its opposition to Glavpolitput's proposals. On 21 July Tomskii spoke to the congress, stressing that the attention of unions must be concentrated on the problems of its members, not on production tasks: 'every union member must feel in all situations his tight link with his labour organization, considering that he is a member of the union and that the union cannot exist without him and that in all situations he must turn to his union and there meet support'. Trotsky's speech was a predictably strong assertion of the need for trade unions to take over management tasks and for specialists and commissars to be granted full authority. He concluded by calling for a merger of Tsekprofsozh with the water transport workers' trade union. Although no vote was published in *Gudok*, the congress clearly rejected reorganization.[61] On 28 August the Communist Party Central Committee, against Tomskii's protest, overruled the union's decision and voted that a new union, with the acronym Tsektran, should be set up to unite railway and water transport workers in an organization dedicated to carrying out

production tasks. The fears of communist trade unionists were confirmed when the first meeting of the new organization made it clear that Tsektran was only the first stage in a thorough 'shake up' of all trade unions.[62]

These debates over union organization might have remained an internal concern of the Communist Party but time was to show that the Workers' Opposition – with its broad theme of hostility to 'bourgeois specialists' and poor working and living conditions and, particularly after it had developed a relatively sophisticated analysis of the alienation of workers from the party in the shape of a theory of bureaucracy (*biurokratizm*) – found a resonance with the grievances of non-Party workers.

The implementation of militarization

In some respects Communist Party labour policies were applied ineffectively in 1920. Trade union organizations displayed an ambivalent attitude to party decisions, as in the case of one-man management. At the Third Trade Union Congress a resolution was passed, after a report by Trotsky, giving general approval to the economic decisions of the IXth Party Congress, including one-man management. However, in his speech Tomskii claimed that the VTsSPS had not changed its view on the question, 'Just as in the past we are saying that the question of one-man management is controversial and is decided by experience.' Tomskii went on to assert the right of trade unions to appoint managers.[63] Individual trade unions were cautious in their endorsement of one-man management. At the metal workers' trade union congress a resolution was approved stating that one-man management should be applied at the lower levels of the economic apparatus and that the size of collegia at the higher levels should be reduced, as the Party Congress had laid down, but it also affirmed the need to 'retain completely the existing form of participation by the union in the construction of the country's economic bodies'.[64]

The resolution passed by the textile workers' trade union congress was less ambiguous. 'Taking into account two years' experience of managing the textile industry, it should be recognized that practice has shown the efficacy of the collegiate principle. All things considered, it should be stated that at the present moment an agreed form of management for individual enterprises has not been produced by

practice.'[65] The introduction of one-man management was not embodied in state legislation and its slow and partial implementation reflected the hostility of trade unionists. By the autumn of 1920, one-man management had been adopted in eighty-two per cent of enterprises surveyed, whilst for metal-working enterprises the figure was only sixty-four per cent, reflecting the strength of opposition sentiment in the metal workers' trade union. Indeed, the reorganization of the metal department of the Supreme Council of the National Economy (VSNKh) in the middle of August led to the rejection of one-man management in the GOMZa (a group of priority enterprises working for transport) factories at the metal workers' trade union plenum at the beginning of September.[66]

The continuing involvement of trade unions in management functions mitigated the impact of militarization on workers. In the summer of 1920 Kutuzov complained about the laxness of many union activists.

> Its no secret that very many business-like and energetic comrades, working in the trade unions, and in management bodies, look through their fingers at breaches of labour discipline, at criminal attitudes to property in factories, that many of them consciously, in order not to 'insult' workers who still do nothing in enterprises not only do not take measures to give them work that is useful and necessary, but hide the fact of their idleness and so on, without end'.[67]

Absenteeism statistics remained high during the first half of 1920, giving Trotsky the justification he was looking for to 'shake up' the trade unions.

Some communists considered the possibility of relaxing the pressure on workers at the beginning of 1920. At a provincial party conference in Tula at the end of February, where a Workers' Opposition group was forming, Kaminskii, the local party leader, noted that 'an intensification of productivity' had led to 'the complete shattering of all workshops and a complete decline in discipline amongst workers. Before us is this task – to give factory and railway workers a breather.' Even at the local level such attitudes did not last long and only four months later Kaminskii was leading an assault on the Workers' Opposition in the Tula party organization, at its third provincial conference, and attacking those who had interpreted the idea of a 'breather' in too liberal a manner and failed to maintain discipline when workers took the 'line of least resistance'.[68]

On the railways draconian measures were applied with particular

determination and effectiveness. In contrast to the economy in general, where the trade unions retained wide powers in 1920, on the railways the trade unions' influence had already been subverted. The establishment of Tsektran relegated their position still further. The priorities for the economy outlined by Trotsky at the IXth Party Congress meant, in the first instance, that government attention was focused on transport and especially the railways. The government's attitude to the transport problem betrayed a note of desperation. On 1 February Lenin wrote to his colleagues that the situation on the railways was 'altogether catastrophic' and he proposed that 'the present ration for those not working for transport be reduced and for those working for transport be increased. The country will have been saved even if thousands more perish.'[69] The 'shock' mobilization of food and labour on to the railways was accompanied by a tougher attitude to labour discipline

On 7 February 1920 the VTsIK approved a decree, 'On Transport', which set out the main lines for the development of labour policy on the railways. Amongst its most controversial provisions were the strengthening of Glavpolitput with party officials from the Red Army, the active participation of Tsekprofsozh in appointing personnel to railway management, the abolition of labour disciplinary courts on the railways and the granting to administrative personnel of the right to administer disciplinary measures instead. In May these measures were extended to water transport.[70] On 10 March a decree called on the People's Commissariat for Transport (NKPS) and Tsekprofsozh to agree measures to combat absenteeism on the railways. On 18 May the NKPS issued a decree on the subject in the spirit of the SNK's general decree on absenteeism whereby a worker or white-collar employee going absent for three days without a valid reason was liable to be declared a 'labour deserter' with appropriate punishments.[71]

These measures were imposed with a new determination in 1920. During the early months of the year there were a number of highly publicized cases of bad labour discipline on the railways being uncovered by roving commissions. After Trotsky's visit to Ekaterinburg, in February, a campaign was initiated against poor labour discipline on the local railways that led to a number of workers being prosecuted for 'a criminally negligent attitude to duties'. The local Communist Party newspaper drew attention to further examples and noted that there were more to be uncovered. The most highly publicized example of these affairs occurred after an investigation of the Tula railway repair

workshops at the beginning of June. Official reports stressed that the Tula railway workshop workers received relatively good food supplies and blamed the problems of the enterprise on the bad attitude of managers and party organizations. After the investigation, forty prosecutions were made, including the head of the stock-servicing administration of the Moscow–Kursk railway and the head and commissar of the workshops themselves, down through numbers of low-level white-collar employees and skilled and unskilled workers.[72]

Later, in June, the spotlight was turned on the Murom repair workshops on the Moscow–Kazan railway. On 21 June a meeting of workers from the workshop was held under Trotsky's chairmanship and a resolution was passed by them promising to improve their output. An article in *Gudok* noted that 200 skilled workers were missing from the workshops. Measures were taken to make up the deficit. Not long after the meeting the case of a skilled metal worker, Belov, who had 'deserted the workshops in April' was reported. He had been arrested in his native region and 'delivered to the workshops under escort'. He was to be tried by a revolutionary tribunal.[73]

The campaign to improve labour discipline on the railways went to absurd lengths. At the beginning of March 1920 three commissars on the Moscow–Kazan railway were ordered to be sacked for 'bad management and indulging slovenliness'. Unfortunately, the three individuals included I. E. Burakov, the founder of the *subbotnik* movement in 1919. The arrest was contested. At the end of March the Communist Party cell at Burakov's depot delegated him to the Central Committee to call for a monument to the *subbotnik* movement to be erected and his case was also taken up by Piatnitskii, the railway workers' trade union leader. The decision to arrest him appears to have been rescinded because, at the beginning of May, an article in the Moscow Communist Party paper praising Burakov's initiative in starting the *subbotnik* movement was published.[74]

These measures, unlike many earlier attempts by the Communist Party regime to enforce labour discipline, had a real impact on the workforce. The first half of 1920 saw a ferocious purge of the railway workforce. On 12 November 1919 a decree on the implementation of martial law on the railways, which had stipulated the setting up of railway military-revolutionary tribunals, was passed. The areas covered by these tribunals was extended in March 1920.[75] On 16 January 1920 a decree increasing the powers of the Transport Department of the

Cheka to arrest railway workers and white-collar employees in the struggle with 'organized counter-revolutionary activity, sabotage and speculation on the railways' was approved. Underlining the role of the transport section of the Cheka at the beginning of February, Lenin, speaking to a conference of provincial Cheka organizations, said, 'You will here agree what role the local sections of the transport Cheka shall play, how they must organize themselves, how they must put forward from their midst new agents in order to struggle with the speculators and saboteurs who exist to greater degree amongst railway workers than elsewhere.'[76]

Figures published in *Pravda* showed that between February and July 1920 3666 railway workers and white-collar employees had been convicted by the main revolutionary tribunals. The largest single category of crimes prosecuted concerned speculation and pilfering and, the second largest, breaches of labour discipline, including such things as absenteeism, but 219 had been convicted for 'cases of conspiracy, rebellion, pogrom, spying and treachery'. Of the 1676 already sentenced, eighty-two had been shot.[77] Such campaigns to enforce draconian forms of labour discipline were accompanied, not surprisingly, by a high level of protest by workers.

The task of general economic reconstruction lost out to the production of munitions after war with Poland broke out at the end of April. The atmosphere became particularly tense as a wave of hysteria about the activities of spies and saboteurs was fuelled by a series of fires, which probably owed as much to dilapidation and the summer heat as to arson. On 11 May 1920 twenty-four provinces, including such industrial centres as Petrograd, Tver, Iaroslavl, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Vladimir, Nizhnii-Novgorod, Moscow, Tula, Saratov and Briansk, were put under martial law. Local authorities were told to intensify the work of all enterprises working for the war effort.[78] On 21 May a number of unpublished decrees affecting the munitions industry were approved by the Council for Labour and Defence (STO). The first called on the People's Commissariat for Food Supplies (NKProd) to ensure that workers in the country's main munitions works received a Red Army ration. The second cancelled summer holidays for nine crucial enterprises including both the main Tula works. A third decree concerned measures to be taken by the Main Committee for Labour Conscription to supply workers to the munitions industry and obliged the Military Revolutionary Council to supply the Tula Ammunition

works and the Kolchuginskii works with 1400 healthy soldiers.[79] These measures coincided with outbreaks of unrest amongst munitions workers.

In 1920 the food supply situation showed small signs of improvement. In 1918–19 NKProd procured 108 million *pudy* of grain whilst in 1919–20 it procured 212 million *pudy*, but ever larger quantities of these foodstuffs went to feed the Red Army and the position of workers improved much less than the figures indicate.[80] In practice, workers remained close to starvation. The failure of the Communist Party leadership to come to grips with the food supply crisis, whilst increasing the pressure on workers for higher productivity to achieve its economic goals, was the most important factor aggravating labour relations at this time. A worker in the Moscow Dinamo works, a key electrical engineering enterprise, recalled the tensions. 'They gave out bread in an eighth of a *pud* portion and then not every day. Potatoes were brought now and again – they were frozen so when they were delivered they rattled like stones. Workers often dropped at their bench from hunger and everyday a crowd gathered at the factory committee, "Will there be bread today?".'[81]

This failure would not have been significant if it had not been accompanied by a serious clamp-down on unofficial sources of food supply. At the same conference of provincial Cheka organizations addressed by Lenin at the beginning of February 1920, F. E. Dzherzhinskii, head of the Cheka, called for greater attention to be paid to the problem of speculation. At the end of the year the Moscow Cheka reported that it had paid increased attention to speculation in 1920. At first its main tactic consisted of raids on markets, but this only led to trading being carried on in side alleys, although 'the flow of speculators to the markets was reduced', and a reduction in the quantity of goods coming on to the market simply led to a rise in prices. The other main method, which had to be halted because of the protests it aroused, consisted of searching all the inhabitants of a given neighbourhood to discover hidden stocks. In the first half of 1920 seventy-five per cent of the cases dealt with by the Moscow Cheka concerned speculation compared with twenty-three per cent in the first half of 1919.[82]

Workers, like all Muscovites, participated in the unofficial markets, as sellers and buyers, and Goldman described how, in Moscow, in the summer of 1920, 'In their raids their measly wares would be seized, their soup and kvass poured out on to the square, and the unfortunates

dragged off to prison as speculators. Those lucky enough to escape the raids would soon crawl back, gather up the matches and cigarettes strewn about, and begin their wretched trade again.' In early 1921, Dan observed in the Cheka prison in Petrograd that the type of prisoners had changed completely during the two years since he had been in the Butyrka prison in Moscow. 'If you look out into the yard where there is an exercise period going on you will hardly see a well-dressed speculator, highly-placed civil servant or White-Guard officer. They are there but they are drowned in the continuous mass of the simple people.'[83]

By the end of 1920 workers not only had to deal with the imposition of harsh forms of labour discipline, they also had to face the Cheka in their workplace, as well as when they attempted to use unofficial sources of food supply. On 15 March 1920 the 'workers' group' of the Moscow Cheka was set up to ensure the 'prevention and liquidation of conflicts and disorders arising in industrial enterprises and institutions in the Moscow province'. The Cheka paid particular attention to ensuring the implementation of the May Day *subbotnik* in Moscow enterprises which led to a number of cases of spontaneous political protest by workers against the communists. After this, the main task of the Cheka's workers' group, according to an official report, was to deal with abuses that were disturbing workers. Between March and December 1920 it carried out twenty-seven investigations into counter-revolutionary agitation and made fourteen arrests, on this account and for instigation to strike. It sorted out twelve cases of conflict between the administration, Communist Party cells and workers, carried out up to 300 investigations of an economic character and took 'the requisite measures'. It also carried out fifty investigations of abuses in enterprises.[84]

It is not possible to estimate with any degree of accuracy how many workers were shot by the Cheka during 1918–21 for participation in labour protest.[85] However, an examination of individual cases suggests that shootings were employed to inspire terror and were not simply used in the occasional extreme case. At the same time, workers could expect more lenient treatment from the authorities than members of other social groups. At the beginning of 1921, an order on punitive policy issued by Dzherzhinskii suggested that 'the wave of pilfering' by workers was not best dealt with by imprisoning guilty workers and instead they should continue to work in their enterprise, with their

colleagues taking responsibility for their future actions. He proposed the Cheka adopt the following slogan, 'Prison for the bourgeoisie, comradely pressure for workers and peasants'.[86]

Similar differential treatment was meted out where more serious punishments were involved. A non-communist observer in Aleksandrovsk in early 1921 was told that a group of workers who had refused to be mobilized to work in the Urals had been declared counter-revolutionaries and imprisoned in a concentration camp, which in total held about 120 persons. He noted, 'These were predominantly workers since those belonging to other classes of the population were simply shot by the local Cheka.'[87] It goes without saying that conditions in the concentration camps often meant death. The following report was made on the camp for forced labour in the industrial settlement of Sormovo, which must have had many worker inmates, at the end of 1920.

> The organizational work of the forced labour camp in Sormovo, which was completed recently, has come to a standstill. The reason for the halt in this work is the developing epidemic of typhus which has infected almost all the inmates. A quarantine has been imposed on the camp which is still in force. The camp, which was intended for 200 persons, contains 371. Those who are sick with spotted typhus number fifty-six, relapse typhus – 218, dysentery – ten, typhoid fever – four, various illnesses – thirty-eight, other uninfectious diseases – 144. Twenty-one are dead. There are no medical personnel at present since the doctor, nurse and assistant have fallen sick and are in the hospital. In the camp there is a lack of linen and food; there are no bathing facilities, laundry or disinfection facilities.

The Sormovo soviet executive committee promised to take urgent measures to rectify the situation.[88]

Fortunately, most workers avoided such a horrific fate but during 1920 they, nonetheless, faced an increasingly effective application of coercive labour policies. The outbreak of war hindered general economic reconstruction, but industry does not appear to have suffered as badly during the Polish war as it did during the Civil War. In 1920 the implementation of coercive labour policies was far from complete but, by the middle of the year, they were beginning to be reflected in a stemming of the reduction in the size of the industrial workforce and in higher productivity figures. The reasons for this turnaround can be partly attributed to a change in the food supply situation since many rural provinces were now suffering famine, and the food supply

apparatus was now working more efficiently. More important was the increasing effectiveness of labour policies. In 1920 34.5 per cent of a worker's time was lost, taking into account not just time lost through absenteeism, compared with 65.3 per cent in 1919. Comparing statistics for the number of days worked in the months of July and August in 1920 and 1921, a Soviet economist notes that the figures in 1920 are considerably higher.[89] These improvements reflect the campaigns against 'labour desertion' and the efforts by workers to procure food from the villages through local exchange in the spring of 1920. As Communist Party labour policies began to impinge more and more on the exhausted workforce so did the potential for conflict intensify.

Conclusion

By early 1920 the Civil War was largely over. Iudenich's offensive against Petrograd at the end of 1919 had been repulsed and his army had fallen to pieces. Denikin's forces in the south were also in disarray and in February Kolchak was captured and executed. Hopes that Soviet Russia would break out of its international isolation were high when the allied blockade was lifted in February. The possibility of real peace opened up prospects for economic reconstruction and a rise in living standards. War had distorted the whole economy as the nation's meagre resources had been concentrated on supplying the Red Army. The forced requisitioning of foodstuffs from the peasantry did not solve food shortages but at least it could be justified on the grounds of military expediency. The occupation by the Bolsheviks of important grain-producing areas, Ukraine, the North Caucasus and Siberia, gave hope of better supplies. The grain supply crisis in the spring of 1920 was not as severe as those in 1919 and 1921, and there was even reason to believe that the basis of the whole system of requisitioning and supply might be relaxed.

Despite the widespread feeling that peace would bring a general improvement in the political and economic situation in the country, the Communist Party leadership took victory as a sign of the correctness of its ideological approach and set about the task of economic construction on the basis of an intensification of War Communism policies with redoubled determination. The relative improvement in the food supply situation for workers in 1920 was still far from guaranteeing a living ration and forcing workers into the factories only

led to increased tensions. Goldman spoke to a Putilov worker at this time who, when asked about mobilization and one-man management, replied, 'As if we had not been driven enough before. Now we are to work under the military whip. Of course, we will have to be in the shop or they will punish us as industrial deserters. But how can they get more work out of us?'[90] This dilemma was reflected in a new political note in workers' protest – the frequency of the slogan of 'free labour', for example – and the development of the Workers' Opposition amongst communist trade unionists.

2

The intensification of industrial unrest, January–September 1920

The pattern of industrial unrest: the railways and munitions industry

There were distinct elements of continuity between the industrial unrest in 1920 and 1917. This is not surprising since the form of industrial unrest in 1920, as in the pre-revolutionary period and in 1917, was closely bound up with enterprise traditions and shop-floor sub-cultures. The size of the Russian industrial workforce had declined steeply during the Civil War but where enterprises stayed open, even if they frequently worked with major interruptions, their traditions and shop-floor sub-cultures proved remarkably resilient. An examination of industrial unrest in 1920 shows that such sub-cultures were still capable of providing the leaders and shared values on which resistance to labour policies based on coercion and Communist Party enthusiasm could be organized. As might be anticipated, the leaders of unrest were often to be found amongst the skilled male workers who enjoyed positions of authority in the informal shop-floor hierarchies.

Furthermore, despite intense repression, small groups of politicized activists were also important in initiating protest and some enterprises developed traditions of opposition to the communists. Similarly, tensions between different groups of workers continued to be a major aspect of unrest and it is not only possible to detect tensions between male and female workers, but also between workers who could easily benefit from the informal economy and those who relied on state rations. However, the growing divergence between the Communist Party programme and the reality workers faced led to greater general

confrontation between the Communist Party and workers, and the politicization of economic grievances.

There was also continuity between the pattern of industrial unrest in 1919 and that in 1920. As in 1919, in 1920 the railways were given priority in the communists' plan for economic reconstruction and the accompanying campaigns to tighten labour discipline provoked a high level of unrest. A similar situation is observable in the munitions industry after the outbreak of war with Poland at the end of April. Railway workers had long traditions of protest which had not been suppressed in 1918–19. Even though the organized resistance of the non-bolshevik Vikzhel trade union had been broken at the end of 1917 and anti-bolshevik activists purged, since the demand for skilled labour was high, many of them found their way back on to the railways. Ironically, the priority assigned to the railways by the government reinforced this tendency as workers were militarized and forbidden to leave their jobs or were transferred from closed enterprises on to the railways. Shortages of skilled labour in the autumn of 1920 meant that Polish prisoners of war and convicts were being employed in the Tula railway workshops. It was also reported that strikers had been drafted in from concentration camps.[1] Railway workers were also more prone to come into conflict with the communists because the nature of their work allowed them to travel to the countryside to obtain additional supplies of food for their own use and trade. This circumstance created the grounds for further tension as Communist Party policies in 1920 increasingly attempted to restrict the opportunities for journeys to the countryside for barter with the peasantry.

Moscow was the hub of the Russian railway network and its strategic repair workshops experienced repeated unrest in early 1920. In 1917 they had been bolshevik strongholds but the SRs had always been popular amongst railway workers and they still retained activists in 1920. At the beginning of January 1920 there was a strike at the Moscow repair workshops of the Kursk railway, which employed 1600 workers. Although it was not a particularly sensational strike in itself, it received wide publicity for several reasons. First, it was regarded as an opportunity to highlight the need to tighten discipline on the railways. A trade union journal noted that the workers had struck several times in the recent past.[2] Articles on the strike in *Pravda* stressed that workers at the workshops were well-off in terms of food supplies but also made good use of the opportunities that the railways

offered for speculation.[3] It was claimed in one article that thirty per cent of workers were absent at any one time (in another forty per cent), that sickness certificates were widely abused and that productivity was extremely low. In keeping with the usual themes of the campaign to tighten labour discipline on the railways, the negligent attitude of management was also condemned. Second, it provided a pretext to clamp down on political opposition since a small group of Left Socialist Revolutionaries (LSRs) were reported as being active in the workshops. Finally, the Kursk railway was a vital channel for the transport of grain from the grain surplus black-earth provinces and its efficient working was vital to alleviate the food crisis in Moscow.

On 2 January a meeting was initiated by a LSR, Sherokin, in the workshop's paint shop. Speakers complained about the food supply situation and demanded the abolition of the trade pickets, which had been set up on the railways to stop the informal trade with the countryside, and called for the legalization of 'free trade'. A trade union representative at the meeting warned that the union would take measures against strikers but was greeted with shouts of 'shame'. A strike began and an attempt was made to spread it down the line to Liublino, about half a dozen miles outside Moscow. However, this was foiled by the arrest of six activists. The trade union ordered the closure of the workshops, which would deprive workers of their rations, and set up a commission to investigate the situation. In its report the commission put special emphasis on the responsibility of management for creating the atmosphere in which a strike could take place. Thus, in addition to the 103 workers who received punishments of imprisonment and hard labour, a number of specialists and commissars were also prosecuted.[4]

An SR who left Soviet Russia at the beginning of 1920, suggested in a memorandum to the British Labour Party that another strike at these workshops took place in March.[5] However, he seems to have confused dates and Soviet sources point to an softening in the attitude of workers in the middle of January. As early as 14 January a meeting of workers in the Kursk workshops responded to a speech by Bukharin by agreeing to participate in a *voskresnik* (a *subbotnik* on a Sunday), and establish a 'soviet brigade' which would work in an exemplary manner. The presence of such a senior communist at the workshops testifies to the importance attached to the strike by the Communist Party leadership. On 18 January the guards at the station where the

strike had occurred voted to expel 'loafers' from their ranks. In April forty-four of the strikers were released after they promised to work to raise productivity and a meeting of workers voted to do three hours' unpaid overtime during Labour Week at the beginning of May.[6] However, the subsequent quiescence of the Kursk workshop workers at this time should be attributed more to apathy than anything else. On 28 May, a meeting begun in the workshops half an hour before the end of work to attract workers saw almost all of them leave when the works siren was sounded, although the meeting continued for another one and a half hours.[7]

The most widely publicized case in the campaign to improve labour discipline on the railways occurred in connection with an investigation into the railway repair workshops in Tula, which was on the Moscow–Kursk line, at the end of May or beginning of June. The background to the investigation is not clear. Poor productivity alone would seem an inadequate reason for the widespread coverage it was given in the Communist Party press, and the serious strike that broke out in the Tula munitions works only days later adds to suspicions that something more significant had occurred, even though it was reported that there was no 'anti-Soviet organization' amongst the workers. Whatever the case, the investigation stressed the relatively fortunate position of the Tula railway workers as regards food supplies and that their main shortcoming was their 'complete indifference to what was going on'. The workers' failure to display the correct degree of labour enthusiasm was attributed to the negligence of management and party organizations. Criticism of the workshop administration went beyond technical matters and party officials and commissars were accused of having become alienated from the workers. 'The whole trouble turned out to be that political and administrative persons, standing at the head of the workshops, became lazy, became alienated from the masses, and turned into petty bureaucrats.'[8] Subsequently they received the heaviest punishments.

Protest by workers on the Kazan railway, which stretched to the Volga provinces and beyond, and was the other main line supplying food to Moscow, was no less a problem. The main repair workshops of the Kazan line in Moscow were one centre of discontent. The tensions were revealed when reports of a number of attacks on workshop commissars were published in *Pravda*. In February engineers were attacked for abusing their position to procure food supplies, and in

March it was reported that workers were making fun of a commissar for his ignorance and that a worker who had argued with him had been arrested by the Cheka. Such discontent would not have worried communists greatly if it had not been for the fact that there was not one communist activist left in the workshops by the end of April since all the others had been delegated to work in administration. 'Mensheviks' put up candidates in the workshops in the Moscow Soviet election. One of these candidates was reported to have been expelled from the Communist Party for 'drunkenness' and 'agitation against Soviet power'.[9]

The communists' problems seem to have been even greater in the railway wagon repair workshops at Perovo, a little further down the line to Kazan. In March 1920 the Moscow Communist Party newspaper published a resolution of the Perovo workers which shows that there were tensions.

> We, the Perovo workers, have decided that in the future we will have an honourable attitude towards our duties, unconditionally fulfil all the tasks of our superiors, brigade leaders and foremen. We will mercilessly struggle with sloth and ask Soviet power only for one thing: pay attention to our terrible situation and improve our food supplies so that we receive the strength to work and struggle with the devastation of transport. We also demand that all measures be taken to find materials the shortage of which is holding up our work.

The newspaper's editor noted, 'This resolution is set out too diplomatically and does not satisfy us. In it can be found the echoes of the speeches of those social bagmen [moderate socialists] amongst the railway workers who put down all the problems of transport to the food supply and industrial crisis. The conscious worker must know that Soviet power gives workers the maximum of food and materials it can give.'[10]

Dissatisfaction did not end and shortly afterwards a Perovo worker was reported to be complaining about the methods of a workshop commissar who 'punishes us for absenteeism and imprisons us in a cold cellar for days'. The workers' reaction to ill-treatment was to refuse to work conscientiously. These tensions came to a head in a strike of eighty-seven Perovo workers on 27 May. Mensheviks were reported as having been active at the workshops, although suffering from a weak organization. The arrest of the initiator of the *subbotnik* movement, Burakov, who worked at the Sortirovochnaia locomotive

depot on this line, was also undoubtedly a side product of these conflicts. Workers at his depot were criticized in April for their religious observances and for making selfish food supply demands.[11]

The spring of 1920 saw discontent on the railways all over the country. On 15 February a strike which broke out in the lathe shop of the railway repair workshops in Vologda spread to other parts of the enterprise. An investigative commission was appointed and local communists were strongly criticized and three senior officials sacked.[12] Relations between Ekaterinburg railway workers and local communists were also strained. Trotsky's visit there in February led to the initiation of a campaign to tighten labour discipline and raise productivity on the local railway network. Compulsory *subbotniki* and campaigning 'weeks' and even 'months' were common methods used to achieve results even though they were very unpopular with workers. When a general meeting of the railway workers at the Ekaterinburg railway depot was called to endorse a resolution on a Labour Month, at the end of March, the official report was greeted with whistles. One hundred workers voted to endorse the report and an extension to the working day, and 400 opposed. An article in a local Communist Party newspaper called for the culprits to be expelled from the trade union.[13] Railway worker activists began to agitate against such measures. The Ekaterinburg board of the railway workers' trade union voted to transfer sixty-four workers from the main railway workshops to another town for absenteeism and agitation against Soviet power. In response, the sixty-four workers drew up a declaration which was read at a general meeting of the workforce in the workshops. The declaration complained about elected representatives who 'have been turned into bureaucratic pen-pushers', the 'police Communist Party', the 'draconian Taylor system', and attacked specialists and the absence of a 'workers' management'.[14]

At the beginning of April the first conference of railway workers on the Perm–Ekaterinburg railway met. The 160 delegates were reported as being suspicious of the Communist Party authorities. A non-Party delegate was elected chairman of the meeting and he demanded that delegates be guaranteed freedom of debate and immunity from arrest. There was an angry response to official reports on the economic situation and labour discipline. In particular, there was resentment at accusations that there were layabouts and saboteurs amongst railway workers. Delegates demanded that *subbotniki* be made

truly voluntary and that they be given food before they were asked to work. Eventually, the official resolution was approved but subsequent articles in the local press leave no doubt about the hostile mood of the conference. Political demands were combined with economic. The alternative to draconian labour disciplinary measures and the restoration of managerial authority were 'soviets composed exclusively of toilers'. The pre-condition of meetings was the guarantee of freedom of debate and immunity from arrest for delegates.

In June the railway workers' trade union organization in Ekaterinburg was accused of poor production work, but since the food supply situation on the local railways was described as 'catastrophic' it is not surprising that productivity was low. In July it was again accused of poor work and the board was dismissed and replaced.[15] Despite great activity by the Railway Commission for the Struggle with Labour Desertion, which led to 4233 prosecutions in July and August and a fall in absenteeism, the situation on the local railways continued to give cause for concern. In September A. Chashchikin, the chairman of the Perm railway workers' trade union committee, noted that railway workers could not carry out their duties in the prevailing conditions. At the end of October an editorial in the local press noted that absenteeism was still a serious problem and blamed poor supplies of food and clothing. It warned that Communist Party cells on the railways were losing their influence amongst workers.[16]

A campaign to tighten labour discipline and improve labour productivity on the Petrograd network got underway in early August 1920. Articles in the newspaper of the local railway political department noted a consequent rise in discontent and in one case linked demands for 'free labour' with the campaign.[17] The biggest single enterprise working for transport in Petrograd, the Aleksandrovskii locomotive building works, was a centre of opposition. The Aleksandrovskii works were situated to the south-east of the city not far from the Obukhovskii works, also a centre of anti-communist activity, and had seen strikes in 1918 and 1919. Reflecting the shortage of skilled workers, anti-communist activists were still present here in 1920. In the summer of 1920 the Aleksandrovskii works elected delegates to the Petrograd Soviet from the SR(Minority) list. In early August there was a purge of communists in the Aleksandrovskii works and a list of fifteen who had left the party citing 'difficult family circumstances' was published. The results of the renewed pressure were evident when only candidates

from the Communist Party list were elected to a local trade union congress several days later.

An *émigré* source provides interesting details of the new disciplinary measures at the enterprise. A converted railway carriage had been installed behind the works as a prison for workers convicted of breaching labour discipline. Recalcitrant workers were held there from eight in the evening till eight in the morning when they were let out to work. On 18 August twenty-eight workers refused to carry out compulsory overtime and others refused to work the following day, which was a religious holiday, the Feast of the Transfiguration. The discontent was confined to three shops: the mechanical, assembly and tender. In response, the works commissar decreed that those who refused to work would lose seven days' rations for each day lost. Eventually, after workers sent representatives to negotiate, the commissar agreed to withdraw the fines if Order No. 1042 was fulfilled.[18]

Clearly, tension remained high and an article in the political department newspaper warned of the effectiveness of anti-communist agitation in the works at the end of the month and accused workers of committing acts of sabotage by placing broken saws in piston valves. On 28 August workers sent three representatives to the works commissar to request that since they had fulfilled Order No. 1042 the fines should be withdrawn. However, the fines were not withdrawn and the workers' representatives were arrested and handed over to a tribunal. The activity of one of the shop-floor activists, F. Vasiliev, is described. As the elder of a group of eighty-four carpenters employed on repairing the railway wagons, he enjoyed widely recognized authority. In the past Vasiliev had been a member of the Bolshevik Party but had left and now put forward demands for increases in pay and agitated against the carriage prison.[19]

On 31 August workers in the three shops mentioned above stopped work and demanded the release of their representatives. The workshops' SR(Minority) delegates to the Petrograd Soviet were sent for and the workers drew up a list of demands:

1. the release of their representatives;
2. withdrawal of fines;
3. a bonus for fulfilment of Order No. 1042;
4. abolition of the converted railway carriage used as a prison; and
5. a promise not to exile strikers to Murmansk, in the far north of the country, as a punishment.

The SR(Minority) soviet delegates, dutifully following the tactics of their party leadership in trying to persuade the communists that they were a responsible opposition, sought unsuccessfully to mediate between the two sides. One SR(Minority) soviet delegate called on the workers to return to work, complained that they should have informed him earlier of their grievances and promised to take them up with the authorities. The authorities were evidently divided since, whilst some promised to look into the matter, others were pursuing an aggressive policy which culminated in mass arrests.[20]

At this point the workers were locked out of the works and a guard of seventy sailors placed outside the enterprise. On 2 September the Cheka arrested the SR(Minority) soviet delegates and about thirty workers, including members of the SR(Minority) and non-Party workers. The opportunity was taken to carry out a general round-up, and arrests were made at the Metallicheskii works, the Rechkin works and the Obukhovskii works. After the arrests, a meeting was held to elect new soviet delegates but the workers refused to co-operate and a further 150 were arrested and exiled to Murmansk or transferred to other workshops. At the same time a meeting of communists in the works was held and strong attacks were made on the negligent attitudes of management.[21]

The purge of the Aleksandrovskii railway, which linked Petrograd and Moscow, was not limited to Petrograd. On 27 August the Main Revolutionary Military Railway Tribunal tried a case involving workers in the Moscow workshops of the line. On 26 June the workshop commissar had received an order from the NKPS to transfer workers to other lines. A number of workers refused to comply even when threatened with arrest. One non-Party worker, Kostriukov, was arrested for inciting his colleagues to hold a meeting to secure the repeal of the order. Amongst the other arrested workers was an ex-menshevik, Vavilkin, and another worker, Gavrilin, who had strong connections with the SRs. He still had in his possession a party duplicator and a speech by V. Chernov, the leader of the SRs, which he was preparing to print with a group of sympathizers. Vavilkin and Gavrilin were sentenced to two years' hard labour under guard and Kostriukov, and three others, to one year, providing that they agreed to their transfer.[22]

As in 1919, the munitions sector was, like the railways, subject to particular pressure. In this respect the GOMZa group of enterprises were regarded as a priority sector by the Communist Party leadership.

The basic production of most of these large provincial metal-working enterprises was orientated towards transport, including the building and repair of locomotives and rolling stock and, in peace-time, agricultural machinery. Now production for military needs, particularly armoured trains which played a vital role in the Civil War with its rapidly changing fronts, was the priority task. The enormous Briansk works, one of the GOMZa enterprises, experienced two major strikes in 1920.

In February and March a campaign of severe measures to tighten labour discipline at the Briansk works was initiated. In mid-February labour books were introduced and reports at a local Communist Party conference on the imposition of labour discipline and labour conscription drew strong criticism.[23] On 27 March a joint meeting of representatives of the factory management, the factory committee, the trade unions and other organizations, heard a report on 'stoppages' which had occurred in connection with the distribution of foodstuffs. The meeting called on workers to end their strikes and threatened to close those shops where they refused to comply. The same SR report to the British Labour Party, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, cited a Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate (RKI) document which reported that there were 152 workers from the Briansk works, who had been arrested for participating in a strike in March, in the Butyrka prison in June 1920.[24]

An important source of tension at the Briansk works, frequently mentioned in archival sources, was conflict between agents of military supply bodies, who claimed special powers in the enterprise over the allocation of workers and food supplies, and the trade union-appointed management collegium and the trade union organization itself. In the summer the metal workers' trade union journal attacked the party organization for removing trade union activists from the Briansk works. It also reported that confusion over managerial authority had led to the production programme being altered 'nearly every month'. Workers were not receiving the Red Army ration they had been promised.[25] Anomalies in food supplies caused by the existence of two sources of managerial authority, in conditions of great shortage, whereby workers received superior rations if they were engaged on military work, without regard to traditional rates and differentials, was an additional factor in creating the atmosphere in which a strike broke out.

On 10 May representatives of the Briansk works management,

factory committee, trade union and other organizations met to discuss 'a stoppage' and called for the declaration of martial law. The precise causes of the strike are not clear. Food supply difficulties were one factor and so probably were campaigns to tighten labour discipline. As everywhere else in Soviet Russia, May Day in the Briansk works was declared a compulsory *subbotnik*. An order by the local organizational commission shows that resistance was expected and promised 'severe measures' against workers not reporting for duty. The swift calls for, and approval of, the introduction of martial law indicated not only the heightened atmosphere that had followed the Polish invasion at the end of April, but also a possible political dimension to the strike. The Briansk works had been involved in the anti-bolshevik Conference Movement in the spring of 1918 and had experienced a strike in early 1919. The visit of the Menshevik Party Central Committee delegation in the autumn of 1919 no doubt inspired local activists. On 11 May the Briansk works, and the settlement it was situated in, were declared to be under martial law because of the complete halt to work in the enterprise. A declaration by the local Red Army garrison commander noted that, 'Any speech against Soviet power, incitement to armed rising, espionage, looting and violence I will punish as crimes according to war-time laws, on the spot.' Furthermore, he ordered that, 'All entertainments and fairs in the public gardens should end at 12 midnight.'[26]

The organization and form of the strike, as at the Aleksandrovskii works and later at the Tula works, was shaped by traditional shop-floor hierarchies and sub-cultures which were threatened by food supply anomalies. The GOMZa enterprises enjoyed priority in the allocation of rations and their workers were less affected by economic devastation than most. The limited available information indicates that skilled, experienced workers were still prominent in the Briansk work-force in 1920. The proportion of skilled workers (overwhelmingly male) decreased by only three per cent, from sixty-two per cent to fifty-nine per cent between January and October 1919, with a reduction in the total workforce from 9041 to 8436. This is approximately a thirty to forty per cent reduction on the 1916 workforce. Over the same period production had fallen by a factor of four. In the summer of 1920 an agent of a military supply department in the enterprise wrote 'only real workers, who were unable to leave for the villages, have remained in the enterprise'. Circumstantial evidence suggests that shop elders

were involved in the strike. On 1 July an article in the local Communist Party newspaper attacked former elders who 'appeared to be "representatives of the workers" but who in no way expressed their interests'. They were accused of encouraging loafing and absenteeism.[27]

The strike appears to have provided an opportunity for the metal workers' trade union, through the Metal Department of the VSNKh, to reassert its managerial authority in the works. On 12 May it resolved to dismiss the factory management collegium for negligence and to send its representative, Shur, later a spokesman for the Workers' Opposition, to the enterprise 'with wide powers and authority ... to do all that is necessary to restore normal life in the enterprise'. The factory was clearly still in a chaotic state ten days later when Shur arrived and announced his intention to restore order and discipline in the enterprise. He promised to improve food supplies and to struggle 'in a decisive manner with loafing, an unconscientious attitude to duties and desertion from the labour front'.[28]

Perhaps the most impressive strike mounted by workers in 1920 was that of the Tula munitions workers in June. A strike in Soviet Russia's most important munitions works in June 1920 was particularly dramatic since at this time the Red Army was in full retreat before the Poles but, curiously, accounts of the strike do not mention the war as a factor predisposing workers either in favour of or against strike action. Instead it is the traditional militancy of the Tula workers (they had struck twice in 1918 and once again in 1919) which is the key to understanding this strike. The militancy of the Tula workers was visible in the presence of opposition groups; both mensheviks and the Workers' Opposition were active in Tula. In the March 1920 town soviet elections, the Armaments works elected both mensheviks and SR(Minority) delegates. In the Communist Party district committee Workers' Opposition influence was strong and at the Communist Party's third provincial conference, in June, Workers' Oppositionists were accused of being a 'disorganizing influence' in the enterprise.[29]

Traditions of militancy in Tula were supported by the relative stability of the workforce. In 1920 the Tula workforce contained a high proportion of skilled, long-standing, hereditary workers. Tula suffered little from the demobilization of industry in early 1918, and later the demands of the Civil War, and the attention devoted to it, in terms of special rations and exemptions from mobilization, meant that the workforce was larger in 1920 than in 1914 although smaller than in

1917. Confirming this, a survey in 1922 showed that, of the 16,300 workers in the Armaments works at that time, there were 1136 workers who had begun their career in the previous century, only 2500 workers with connections to the land (sixteen per cent), with a further 3300 who had been born in the countryside but had no other connection, and that the remaining 10,500 had been born in the town.[30] The effective shop-floor leaders that the strike threw up were the product of this type of stable workforce. Furthermore, the militancy of skilled workers had grown since the Revolution because Communist Party labour disciplinary measures had undermined shop-floor hierarchies and fixed trade union wage norms had encroached on areas where workers had traditionally exercised a degree of autonomy. Just before the strike a decision to abolish shop committees, as part of the general tightening of discipline, and replace them with representatives of the factory committee was publicized in Tula.[31] This attack on traditional shop-floor hierarchies must have been especially provocative.

As a key munitions works, labour discipline was applied with particular consistency at the Tula Armaments and Ammunition works: one-man management, the employment of specialists and a strict attitude towards absenteeism had long been the norm. Workers' Opposition agitation concentrated particularly on the employment of specialists. At the Communist Party's provincial conference at the beginning of June 1920, Kaminskii attacked Workers' Opposition agitation in the Armaments and Ammunition works which had criticized the soviet apparatus as being alienated from the workers, and the appearance of ideas which suggested that the Communist Party leadership did not want to promote workers into administrative and managerial jobs, was putting pressure on workers, helping the intelligentsia and bourgeoisie and taking the side of the 'bourgeois specialists'. It also appears that a concerted campaign to raise labour discipline was under way in Tula on the eve of the strike. At the end of May, a week before the strike, Kaminskii attacked local communists for not taking a greater role in tightening labour discipline.[32] Hardliners triumphed at the June conference and members of the Workers' Opposition were ousted from the party committee. The simultaneous arrival of the commission to investigate poor labour discipline at the Tula railway workshops and the subsequent show trial of managers and workers no doubt heightened the atmosphere in the town.

Trouble had been brewing in the Armaments works before the

outbreak of a full-scale strike. A report in the local Communist Party newspaper on 22 May attacked strikes amongst skilled instrument workers in the instrument shop and claimed that other workers in the factory were upset at the loss of bonuses caused by stoppages. The all-out strike began on 6 June. The court proceedings which followed the strike give a detailed picture of the role played by a number of shop-floor leaders in its organization. In particular, there was a certain Bubnov, 'an outstanding personality, developed, clear thinking, a former menshevik, obviously a professional organizer of strikes'. Other reports confirm that the strike began in the instrument shop, where Bubnov worked, and spread from there.[33] The strike began in the following way.

> On 5 June in the instrument shop, where Bubnov worked, an order was put up about obligatory work on Sunday 6 June. The workers asked that work on that day be postponed on the grounds that Sunday was the Feast of All Saints, but their request was rejected and the first shift arrived at the enterprise but did not begin work. When the senior controller, Podemshchikov, began to persuade them to start work Bubnov spoke up and declared, 'However much you try to persuade us we won't work anyway', and added, 'how can I work when I haven't eaten for three days?'

On the following day Bubnov again figured as the spokesman of the strikers.

> When the workers were asked why they wouldn't work on working days and it was explained to them that by not working they would never improve their material position Bubnov declared, 'We won't work, all the same, until you satisfy our demands and give us flour, grain and pork', and began to explain that 'Soviet Power has everything but only wants us to die of hunger'. Apart from this he stayed to agitate amongst the second shift in his workshop and later went to agitate at the New Armaments works.[34]

Whilst menshevik sources stress the role of labour discipline, especially the arbitrary and harsh actions of the works director, in provoking the strike, communist sources stress food supply difficulties. The local Communist Party newspaper summarized the workers' demands thus:

1. the distribution of one *pud* of flour every month;
2. a full Red Army ration for family members; and
3. the abolition of registration of workers' wives for labour conscription.[35]

Suspicion of abuses within the food supply apparatus was an important concern. An article in the local newspaper attacked 'all kinds of ridiculous, absurd rumours of flour and meat which had arrived but which had been hidden and not distributed'. Earlier Kaminskii had singled out the demand that NKProd bodies should consist exclusively of workers as a result of Workers' Opposition influence in the Armaments works.[36]

The rhetoric used by the authorities in their response to the strike was predictably extreme. In practice, different Communist Party organizations reacted in different ways and the overall response appears to have been the usual mixture of limited material concessions and the arrest of strike leaders. On 8 June the local newspaper published a declaration from the Tula Soviet threatening strikers with 'the most repressive measures, including the application of the highest measure of punishment', a clear reference to executions. An Extraordinary Investigative Commission and an Extraordinary Revolutionary Tribunal were set up to deal with offenders. A decree approved by the second Tula provincial congress of trade unions, which happened to be meeting at the same time, was not quite so extreme in its reaction. It demanded that striking workers be sent to concentration camps but omitted to call for executions. For the future it called for a purge of the Armaments works of 'criminal counter-revolutionary elements, saboteurs and malicious deserters'.

The following day Tula was declared to be under a 'state of siege' by the local military authorities. On the same day the Revolutionary Committee of the Tula Armaments works threatened strikers with the following punishments.

> All those arrested for the criminal disruption of work will be handed over to the court of the Extraordinary Revolutionary Tribunal and will be punished with the full rigour of wartime laws, that is: detention in a concentration camp with forced labour, sending to the front to serve under the officers of the punishment battalions for deserters, long-term detention in prison; the most malicious black-hundred-spy-elements, agents of the Polish White Guards – to the firing squad.

Rather superfluously after such a catalogue of punishments, the order noted that strikers would not be paid for days they did not work and would lose their ration cards. This last threat was put into immediate effect.[37] On 11 June it was reported that there had been a return to

work in all shops and that management had taken up its normal functions. The same issue of the local newspaper reported the arrest and sentencing of twenty-three workers to a forced labour camp until the end of the war.

The combined impact of these measures did not prevent further unrest and the workers put forward new demands. On 11 June new agitation was begun at the Armaments works calling for 'comradely solidarity' with those arrested. The agitation was concentrated once again in the instrument and machine-gun shops. Further arrests were made, including three mensheviks, one of whom was a delegate to the town soviet. The court proceedings gave a dramatic account of what happened.

> On the morning of 11 June, when work was already in progress at full speed and the strike had already been completely suppressed, the workers of the First Machine Gun shop, having worked one and a half to two hours, under the influence of agitation by groups of persons, went out into the works yard and began an unorganized meeting, without permission from the relevant authorities, despite the territory of the factory having been declared to be in a state of siege.

In this instance the main organizer was a worker named Veshnikov. Like Bubnov, he obviously exercised considerable authority amongst his fellow workers. It is clear that he was a persuasive orator with more than a little courage. The court report noted the following.

> 'He more energetically than anyone else carried on agitation. At the same time as the works commandant Mozin was persuading the workers not to commit a crime, not to undermine the front with criminal behaviour, he cried, 'Haven't you had enough of feeding us fables', and turned to the workers who were splitting off having expressed a desire to work, 'Ah, you traitors, by your treachery you are betraying us.' Under his influence the crowd that was coming to its senses once again [illegible word] and would not listen to any arguments, so that the administration was forced to take the most decisive measures, right up to threatening the especially rebellious with being shot on the spot, on the grounds of the state of siege, to calm them down. But even so Veshnikov returned, 'Don't try to frighten us, we are not afraid of it'.

Although there is no precise information about the circumstances under which the strike finally ended, it is clear that the situation was still tense a week later. On 19 June there was an extraordinary night-

time session of the town soviet when 'a programme for the suppression of counter-revolution' was approved and, retrospectively, 'the transfer of Tula to the position of an armed camp'. The programme noted that anyone 'disrupting work, forcing others to stop work by violence, threats and dissimulation will be subject to immediate arrest and trial under military laws'.[38]

The Tula strike highlights the way in which workers, particularly skilled workers who were products of long-standing shop-floor sub-cultures and hierarchies, retained the capability as well as the will to defend their interests. Nonetheless, the absence of an organized political leadership proved fatal to the success of the strike. Bubnov complained to his interrogators of the inability of the Tula workers to organize and present their demands effectively. The arrest of a few outstanding natural leaders such as Bubnov or Veshnikov made it very difficult to sustain a strike. Divisions amongst workers were also evident. The resentment of unskilled workers at the disruption caused by skilled workers going on strike has already been mentioned. The predominantly female workforce at the Ammunition works was late in joining the strike and they returned to work first. A demonstration of workers from the Ammunition works against the strike was organized by the authorities.[39]

A promise of improved food supplies was one concession by the authorities to the strikers, but the tenacity of the workers made mass arrests inevitable. The workforce was purged and 'thousands of workers' put into prison. A menshevik source even suggests that the workers and their wives provoked their arrest in large numbers in an attempt to overwhelm the authorities. Strike leaders were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment with hard labour although many workers were released quite quickly.[40]

The authorities took immediate advantage of their victory to tighten labour discipline. Labour disciplinary courts were introduced in the Armaments works (they already existed in the Ammunitions works), and a two-week 'campaign against labour and military desertion' was ordered. Communists were mobilized to enforce labour discipline. The Communist Party committee in the Zarechenskii district, where the Armaments works was situated and which had been a Workers' Opposition stronghold, was replaced by a 'temporary bureau' which purged and restructured the party organization in the factory. At the Ammunition works the Communist Party organization appointed 'comrades for the supervision of workers not turning up for work'.

Such Communist Party supervisors were sent to the workers' houses, discovered the reasons for a worker's absence and 'demanded their signature on a piece of paper obliging them to turn up to work the following day'. It was claimed that this method brought 3000 workers back to work.[41]

The mensheviks in Tula attempted to play a mediating role during the strikes: the local Communist Party newspaper refrained from accusing the local Menshevik Party organization of active involvement in the unrest and, in a speech to the town soviet, Kaminskii only referred to their 'criminal wavering'. The *émigré* Menshevik Party journal, *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, reported that the Tula Menshevik Party committee tried to mediate between workers and the authorities. It claimed that communists had participated in the strike and it is more than likely that individual mensheviks were also involved, although there is no evidence that either Bubnov or Vishnikov were party members.[42] The conclusion of the strike was followed by mass arrests of local mensheviks anyway.

Opposition socialist parties were not the only possible source of leadership for labour unrest. The development of the Workers' Opposition at the beginning of 1920 has been discussed in the previous chapter, and its general appeal will be discussed in greater detail in the next, but for the moment it is enough to point out that Workers' Opposition agitation, rather than menshevik activity, appears to have been of greater concern to the local Communist Party leadership in Tula. Just before the Tula strikes Kaminskii attacked Party members for spending time discussing 'the role of specialists, the role of the intelligentsia and the coercion they apply to the workers'. This was leading to the 'disruption and lowering of labour enthusiasm'. At the Communist Party's provincial conference a few days later, commenting on the situation in the Armaments works, Kaminskii attacked the future signatory of the Workers' Opposition theses, N. Kopylov, for stirring up mistrust towards the soviet apparatus, 'It's put this way: on the one hand us – the party, and on the other you – the soviet apparatus.'[43]

The pattern of industrial unrest: Moscow printers and bakers

There is a considerable amount of information about the fate of Moscow printers and bakers in 1920. This information exists partly

because of the involvement of prominent mensheviks, who later wrote their memoirs in exile, and partly because of the presence of foreign observers in the city at this time. For the communists, the same factors made these workers, and the labour organizations which represented them and which were practically the last that were not Communist Party-controlled in Soviet Russia, the object of special attention in their press. The involvement of independent labour organizations makes Moscow printers and bakers untypical of the industrial workforce as a whole, but a closer examination shows that, like other workers who came into conflict with the communists, their ability to defend their interests stemmed from the resilience of their shop-floor subcultures and traditions of resistance that had been established in individual enterprises.

Unlike most other groups of Russian workers, printers and bakers had a long history of trade unionism. The Moscow printers' trade union was the first to be organized in Russia and could trace its history back to a Zubatov union in 1903 and a historic strike in September of that year. Victoria Bonnell singles out the Moscow bakers, along with the Moscow printers, when writing about those groups of workers who most successfully organized unions in the 1905–06 period. 'Both the bakers' and the printers' trade unions were uncommonly strong and attracted a large base of support amounting at their peak to about two thirds of the labour force. Under union leadership workers waged a disciplined campaign for a collective agreement.'[44] In the pre-revolutionary period, and through 1917 and beyond, the printers' trade union nationally, as well as in Moscow, was a Menshevik Party stronghold, whilst the Moscow bakers' section of the food processing workers' trade union was, by 1920, strongly influenced by anarchists, such as Pavlov and Kamyshov, and SR Maximalists, such as Niushenkov.

The central printers' trade union had passed into Communist Party hands in August 1919 when the great majority of opposition delegates were refused permission to participate in the union's All-Russian congress. The tactic of forming a Red Printers' Union as preparation for a Communist Party take-over had been rehearsed in Petrograd, where it had replaced the elected board at the end of 1918. In Moscow the Red Printers' Union, formed in the middle of 1919, could attract barely 1500 members, whilst the main union had 16,000 to 17,000. Not surprisingly, elections at the end of 1919, which the two unions

held jointly, gave a twenty-five-member board with only six or seven communists. In early 1920 Communist Party campaigns of agitation amongst Moscow printers consistently produced meagre results. In early January 1920 the Moscow Communist Party committee promised to direct more party members to work amongst printers, but at the end of February the Communist Party fraction of the Moscow printers' union blamed the city district party committee for its failure to make progress and called for the rules of admittance to the party and for the setting up of Communist Party cells in print works to be relaxed.[45]

The leadership of the Moscow printers' trade union board styled its political orientation as Independent. This title harked back to disagreements between bolsheviks and mensheviks in the pre-revolutionary period over the correct relationship between socialist parties and labour organizations, with the mensheviks prepared to allow the latter greater autonomy. In the post-revolutionary period the title struck a chord with the non-Party sentiments of many Russian workers. In the Moscow printers' union mensheviks worked closely with non-Party activists such as N. I. Chistov and Zakharov, who enjoyed particular authority amongst printers. Mensheviks enjoyed support amongst Moscow printers on their own account. Prominent mensheviks such as M. S. Kefali-Kammermakher, A. F. Deviatkin and I. M. Buksin had long-standing links with Moscow printers. A Menshevik Party leader such as Dan could expect an enthusiastic reception from Moscow printers when he addressed the mass meeting, at which the British Labour Delegation was present, in May. In the final analysis, however, the survival of non-communist labour organizations depended on the presence of tolerant communists in the Moscow trade union council.

Although both printers and bakers shared traditions of organization, despite different political affiliations, here the similarity ended. Printers and bakers were both employed in small enterprises but in terms of social origin they were very different. The bakers were an artisanal group of peasant background with a low literacy rate. Printers, on the other hand, were amongst the most urbanized and literate of all workers. The capacity of Moscow printers and bakers to resist Communist Party pressure for so long had its roots in their strong shop-floor traditions rather than labour politics. The ability to put up independent candidates in an election or organize protest action in Soviet Russia involved running serious risks and had to be backed up by firm convictions. The print industry, which demanded a high level of skills

from its workforce, fostered particularly strong shop-floor sub-cultures and hierarchies with the senior male worker enjoying a position of authority. The survival of these sub-cultures and hierarchies into the post-1917 period was facilitated by the relative stability of the print industry workforce in Moscow which, no doubt due to a great increase in the demand for its production after the transfer of the country's capital from Petrograd in 1918, suffered a comparatively small reduction in numbers. Whilst between 1918 and 1920 the size of the Moscow print industry workforce had fallen by roughly twenty per cent, from 11,788 to 9335, the size of the Moscow workforce as a whole fell by over thirty per cent, from 305,861 to 205,427.[46] The older skilled worker whose knowledge was in short supply and whose long-standing residence in the city ruled out flight to the countryside, was likely to have been proportionately less affected by the reduction in numbers.

Traditions of shop-floor political activism were one secret of menshevik success and the printers' strength. As in 1917, militancy after October was strongest in the biggest print works, still usually referred to by their pre-revolutionary names: Sytin, Mamontov, Kushnerov and Levenson. In mid-1920 the Kushnerov works had 671 workers, the Levenson 550, the Mamontov 205 and the Sytin 1290. After the Moscow board of the printers' union was disbanded on the night of 17–18 June, the Sytin works was one of those to strike and mensheviks warned communists not to visit it because the workers there were particularly hostile. In October 1917 the Sytin workers had passed, by an overwhelming majority, a resolution criticizing the bolshevik seizure of power and the Levenson workers claimed that the bolshevik closure of opposition newspapers was worse than the behaviour of the Tsar.[47] The Mamontov works, through its close links with the mint, was later a centre of protest during the mass strikes of February 1921.

The Levenson works was particularly militant. On 4 March 1920, a general meeting of Levenson workers was called. At the meeting communists accused members of the factory committee of corruption, but the printers refused to believe the charges and take any action. The following day another meeting of the Levenson workers saw attacks on the Soviet regime and the approval of a mandate for the union's Council of Representatives. At the beginning of May the Levenson workers struck after holidays were cancelled. The works were closed and the strikers sent to concentration camps after an attempt to start sympathy action failed. After the disbandment of the

Moscow board, the Levenson workers were the last to return to work and only did so when they found themselves isolated.[48]

In their campaign against shop-floor activists in the print industry and the menshevik union leadership, communists attempted to mobilize women print workers, who still represented a minority of the workforce (around thirty-three per cent in the spring of 1921) even after an increase in numbers during the Civil War. Young printers were also targeted since it was believed that their subordinate position in shop-floor hierarchies would make them susceptible to agitation. At the beginning of February 1920 communists convened a meeting of women print workers in Moscow and called on them to play a greater political role. The organization of female and young print workers proceeded, despite an unenthusiastic response, and after the disbandment of the Moscow union the new non-communist temporary board was termed the 'temporary board of young printers, women printers and factory committee representatives'.[49]

These attempts to mobilize categories of workers which, ironically, communists usually regarded as 'politically backward', enjoyed little success. There was genuine resentment amongst women print workers at male domination of the industry and union, but there was little enthusiasm for the Communist Party cause. At one meeting of women print workers at the beginning of July strong feelings were expressed against male printers and the menshevik board was attacked for excluding women from union activities. At another meeting of women print workers in the city district the menshevik board was attacked, but one of those who spoke would only go as far as saying that the menshevik slogans of 'free press, free passage of foodstuffs and independent trade unions' were 'not timely'. Only twenty women from seven print works had bothered to turn up. The potential amongst young printers was even more limited since they made up a large proportion of the lively Menshevik Party youth organization in Moscow. The meeting which elected the 'temporary bureau of young printers' at the end of June was reported as being poorly attended.[50]

The strength of the labour organizations in the print industry and the bakeries stemmed from their strong institutional links with the shop-floor. Factory committees did exist in the print industry but its distinctive form of organization was the Council of Representatives, which was composed of representatives, several from each print works, elected in individual shops where outside pressure was more difficult

to apply. Factory committees, in contrast, were elected at mass meetings, by a show of hands, where Communist Party activists and Chekists could easily identify their opponents. The Council of Representatives proved an effective link between the union leadership and the shop-floor.

After the communists suffered a serious defeat in elections to the printers' union at the end of 1919, they began to try to drive a wedge between the mensheviks and the printers. The All-Russian Conference of Printers held on 21 January 1920 passed a resolution designed to break the organizational hold of the Moscow board. The conference called on the board to fulfil all its obligations to, and seek registration with, the central committee of the union and to abolish the Council of Representatives and replace it with a conference of factory committee representatives. If the board failed to carry out these measures, the conference called on the central committee to disband it. On 30 January the Council of Representatives met to discuss the resolutions of the All-Russian Conference. Communists were in a minority at the meeting and prominent mensheviks, Rostov and Kefali, and non-Party representatives, Chistov and Zakharov, spoke. The meeting decided to seek registration with the union central committee without abolishing the Council of Representatives. An article in *Pravda* reported that the mensheviks had also been prepared to drop their traditional resistance to participation in the printing department of the Moscow economic council collegium if they could retain their links with the Council of Representatives.[51]

This may not appear much of a concession from the mensheviks, but the independence of labour organizations from the state economic apparatus was a key tenet of the Menshevik Party attitude towards trade unions. For mensheviks, Soviet Russia was still a long way from being a workers' state and independent labour organizations were still required to defend the sectional interests of workers. To communists who believed that they were moving rapidly towards establishing a new society, menshevik reservations appeared at best quibbles. This point of view also defined the mensheviks' attitude to the role of factory committees which they believed were disqualified from protecting the interests of workers because of their close links with management. Factory committees were not popular with the printers, and, at a meeting of the Council of Representatives at the beginning of February, they were subject to attack from the floor, especially to accusations that

their members were acting like 'bosses' and receiving privileged rations.[52]

At this stage the union board was able to exact concessions from the Communist Party authorities in Moscow. At a meeting of the Council of Representatives at the beginning of February there were a number of calls to declare a strike, especially from Zakharov. However, the board persuaded the meeting to postpone calling a strike until representations had been made. Exactly two weeks later a meeting of the plenum of the Moscow trade union council accepted some of the economic demands of the printers put forward by the board: the right to special rations and the cancellation of repayment of an advance on wages made in December 1919. Although other demands were turned down, including the request that the trade union council put forward representatives of the board for membership of the Moscow Soviet, and the 'demagogy' of the mensheviks was criticized, the threat of a strike was averted.[53]

The leaders of the Moscow printers' union did all that was possible to defuse unrest amongst printers and demonstrate their responsible attitude to the Soviet authorities. Thus, at a meeting called at the VTsIK print works to support the Levenson strikers at the end of May, a resolution from the floor accused the communists of re-establishing the 'tsarist regime', but Kefali persuaded the meeting to moderate the resolution to read 'bourgeois regime'. However, the fundamental Communist Party hostility to the idea of independent political activity meant that compromises were not likely to develop into a permanent policy and, in the spring of 1920, attacks on the Moscow printers' union became more insistent. During February, when elections to the Moscow Soviet were being held, and in March and April, *Pravda* constantly published the resolutions of Communist Party-controlled printers' organizations attacking the Moscow board.[54] Communist suspicions intensified after war broke out with Poland at the end of April.

The board's calls for restraint caused friction with printers on the shop-floor, but it did not lose their loyalty. In a statement to the British Labour Delegation which visited Moscow in the summer of 1920, the printers' union wrote that each time a strike broke out amongst printers 'the communists and organs of authority were unable to persuade the workmen to begin work, threats and repression could also not work. But the arrival of a representative of the Printers' union to a factory

was sufficient; the conflict ceased immediately.' The board did not receive any credit for its actions and, on the contrary, were still blamed for any discontent amongst printers. They complained to the British visitors that 'in their press and organs of government the communists put the matter in such a way as though the Moscow Printers' Union instigates the workers to strike'.[55]

Since 1917 Moscow bakers had also used their traditions of organization to limit the deterioration in their economic position. Despite frequent resolutions to the contrary by the VTsSPS and the Moscow trade union council, it was reported in early January 1920 that bakers were receiving three *funty* of bread a day, in addition to their normal ration, by order of the bakers' union. In early January 1920 the food processing workers' trade union began to take a greater interest in the Moscow bakers and ordered the disbandment of the section. At this time a debate within the Moscow committee of the food processing workers' trade union was reported. It comprised those who considered that management of bakeries should be handed over to workers' committees, the anarchist and SR Maximalist leaders of the bakers' section, and those who advocated collegiate management, the Bolsheviks. Not long after, on 15 January, a meeting of representatives of Moscow bakeries was held to discuss a decision by the Moscow Soviet to ban payments to workers in their own production. The meeting agreed with the decision in principle but refused to implement it because of the harsh conditions in the industry and a consequent fall in productivity and flight of bakers to the countryside.[56] The reason for the success of anarchists amongst the bakers was attributed, in an article in the Moscow Communist Party newspaper at the beginning of April, to their support for 'consumer communism' – in practice, the distribution of an enterprise's production amongst its workers.[57]

At a mass meeting of 500 bakers (out of a possible 5000) on 8 March 1920, Pavlov strongly attacked the decision of the central food processing workers' trade union to disband the Moscow bakers' section, and the decision of the Moscow Soviet to ban supplementary rations was strongly criticized by other speakers. The meeting voted to retain the section, although on the advice of the representative of the central union, they rejected one member for corruption. Pavlov followed up his advantage and attacked the conduct of the recent Moscow Soviet elections and obtained a vote of no confidence in the new Soviet. Goldman has left a vivid description of how the bakers continued to

give anarchists strong support despite an intense campaign of intimidation.

> The stories told me by the bakers of their election experiences had the quality of our own Wild West during its pioneer days. Tchekists [*sic*] with loaded guns were in the habit of attending gatherings of the unions and they made it clear what would happen if the workers should fail to elect a communist. But the bakers, a strong and militant organization, would not be intimidated. They declared that no bread would be baked in Moscow unless they were permitted to elect their own candidate. That had the desired effect. After the meeting the Tchekists tried to arrest the candidate elect, but the bakers surrounded him and saw him safely home. The next day they sent their ultimatum to the authorities, demanding recognition of their choice and threatening to strike in case of refusal.[58]

The bakers' strike was first reported on 18 May with their main demand being higher bread rations. There were other reasons for the strike. Later in May it was reported that bakers at the No. 3 bakery, the centre of the strike, were suffering war weariness. They were also upset by the corruption of a manager who had been allegedly selling large quantities of bread on the black market. Alexander Berkman, another American anarchist, reports that at the end of May the workers' leaders at No. 3 bakery were arrested and the workers locked out. However, it is not clear that the communists were able to change the bakers' ways and whilst Goldman was keen to stress the political significance of the bakers' strike, she played down its divisive economic implications. 'Thus the bakers triumphed and gained an advantage over their less courageous brothers in the other labour organization of minor importance. In starving Russia the work of the bakers was as vital as life itself.'[59] In fact, even if the bakers did receive economic concessions, their political leaders were soon excluded from active participation in labour organizations.

Meanwhile tensions between the communists and printers persisted. At the beginning of January 1920 many printers had refused to work unpaid overtime during 'Front Week'. Attempts to pass resolutions at this time in support of the victorious Red Army were met with apathy by the printers. Printers also reacted without enthusiasm to the decision to turn May Day into a compulsory *subbotnik*. On 25 April *Pravda* published a special appeal by the Central Committee of the printers' trade union calling on printers to work on May Day. Formal votes on

the issue appear to have been confused. At one print works, Pechatnoe Iskusstvo, the menshevik trade unionist, Rostov, argued that the Labour Week that was to follow May Day was irrelevant to the printers' material circumstances and that only the Council of Representatives could take a decision on the matter. At another print enterprise, the Kazan railway works, a simple vote against participation was recorded and *Pravda* admitted that few printers participated in Labour Week, whatever the vote.[60]

A mass meeting of printers, at which representatives of the British Labour Delegation were present, provided the pretext for hard-liners in the Communist Party leadership to take action against the union. The British Labour Delegation arrived in Moscow on 16 May and a delegation of mensheviks proceeded to the Nikolaevskii station to greet them, picking up supporters from print works on the way, including the entire factory committee of the NKPS print works. The delegation was prevented from meeting the British representatives but a meeting held afterwards at the NKPS print works saw attacks on the new disciplinary courts, the approval of the slogans of the Independents and a decision to arrange a meeting with the British Labour Delegation. Another print works was reported as voting not to participate in a *subbotnik* being held in honour of the visit.[61]

On 23 May a meeting of 'several thousand' printers and British representatives took place. In the main speech, Kefali, on behalf of the Menshevik Party Central Committee, attacked Communist Party repression and was followed by Deviatkin and Dan. The meeting could not have been unknown to the communists because Melnichanskii and the Communist Party printers' leader, Tikhonov, also spoke. A sensation was caused when Chernov, the SR leader who was in hiding from the authorities, appeared on the platform to an ovation and then left before the Cheka could detain him. The pressure to disband the printers' board now became irresistible. At a meeting of the plenum of the Moscow Soviet on 2 June, Melnichanskii attacked the agitation of mensheviks, SRs and Maximalists and condemned strikes by printers and bakers. As a sop to the material grievances of the printers he offered to allow the most tired and sick printers the opportunity to take a holiday. The speeches made by Bukharin and L. B. Kamenev, the leader of the Moscow Communist Party organization, were so insulting they provoked a walk-out by the small group of menshevik delegates.[62]

The printers' union leadership maintained its conciliatory stance to the bitter end. After the meeting with the British Labour Delegation, attacks on the board became particularly strident and calls were made for the arrest of its members and, in the case of Zakharov, who had attempted to publish the proceedings of the meeting with the British Labour Delegation, the threat was carried out. However, at a meeting of the Council of Representatives on 4 June the board passed a resolution which, whilst it called on all printers 'to active defence of the Union's representatives', also absolved the board from 'any responsibility for any complications or conflicts that may arise until the end of the persecution of the Union'.[63]

The fate of the Moscow printers' union was sealed. Communists now publicly called for the arrest of its leaders and the opportunity was taken to step up pressure on the bakers' section. A *Pravda* editorial implicated mensheviks in the strike that had broken out amongst Tula munitions workers. A meeting of communist printers declared that the struggle with the mensheviks should be conducted 'in a military manner' and considered an 'internal front'. All communist printers were to be subordinated to the orders of the bureau of the Communist Party fraction of the union. Special attention was to be devoted to agitation amongst women and young printers.[64] In Petrograd a conference of printers was held which called for the disbandment of the Moscow board.

On 17 June an All-Russian Conference of Printers met and a resolution was passed which accused the Moscow board of 'knifing the Red Army in the back'. The resolution called for the disbandment of the Moscow board with thirty votes in favour and five against (one more than the number of menshevik delegates present) and two abstentions. On the night of 17–18 June the offices of the board were occupied by soldiers.[65] Eleven members of the board were arrested along with twenty-nine members of the Council of Representatives, factory committees and ordinary unionists. They included: N. I. Chistov, P. N. Danilin, A. F. Deviatkin, N. I. Tsipulin, I. M. Buksin, I. N. Iakovlev and I. I. Zenin. The last five were also members of the Moscow Soviet. After being held for three months without trial most were sentenced to terms between six months and two years in prison. The disbandment was approved by the plenum of the Moscow trade union council which appointed a new temporary board. It also voted to disband the bakers' section. Two leading anarchist members of the section, Pavlov and

Kamyshov, an SR Maximalist, Niushenkov, and two other section members, Viurgov and Kuznetsov, were barred from office and arrested to stand trial.[66]

As further testimony to the strength of traditions of organization amongst Moscow printers, after the disbandment of the board not only did twenty-five print works go on strike in accordance with a decision by the Council of Representatives, but a strike committee was set up.[67] Although the strikes were soon suppressed, it was far from clear that opposition sentiment amongst printers and bakers was quickly dispelled. At a general meeting of printers at the Kushnerov works a resolution approving the disbandment of the old board was passed, with only three votes against, but complaints were made against inequalities in the rationing system and, in particular, against special rations for railway workers and those producing munitions.[68] On 17 July a general meeting of workers at the NKPS print works was called to discuss elections to the factory committee. The meeting was addressed by the secretary of the new temporary board but a resolution was passed which read, 'Having heard the report of the Communist Party representative the general meeting of the workers of the NKPS print works refuses to adopt any resolution until the release of the comrade printers arrested in connection with the disbandment of our union and elects a delegation of three persons to lobby for their release.' By 10 August the printers at this print works had succumbed and passed a resolution which expressed 'sympathy with the principles of the Communist Party'. But in mid-August the printers were still reported to lack enthusiasm for unpaid overtime during Peasant Week.[69]

Despite occasional displays of defiance, the disbandment of the printers' board and the bakers' section represented an important watershed. At the end of June and the beginning of July Communist Party resolutions, doubtless against a background of threats, were passed in many Moscow print works, such as the 22nd and 34th works and the 3rd International works. Finally, on 9 July a meeting of representatives of the factory committees of the Moscow print works voted to work unpaid overtime for the victims of the White Terror. The opportunity to vote for opposition parties was further reduced. No mensheviks were elected to the city district soviet, where many of the print works were situated, at the end of August.[70] One curious anomaly to this stands out. A number of indirect attacks were made on the Menshevik

Party-led Moscow board of the chemical workers' trade union but no attempt was made to disband it at this stage. This was despite the fact that Gonikberg, the leader of the Moscow chemical workers' trade union, actively opposed the communists at trade union meetings.[71] This discrepancy may be explained by the fact that Gonikberg was firmly on the left of the Menshevik Party whilst the printers' leaders were on the right, although still loyal to the conciliatory Central Committee line.

The campaign by the communists to disband these two well-entrenched labour organizations highlighted divisions between different groups of workers. The social and political differences between printers and bakers would have been an obstacle to joint action even in normal circumstances but War Communism conditions had increased these divisions. Printers and bakers were affected by the same appalling economic situation but their contrasting positions in the War Communism economy made them react differently; bakers could easily supplement their income from the raw materials and production of their enterprise, whilst printers enjoyed no such opportunities and bitterly resented such practices. The Moscow bakers' main demand was that they be given bread from their own production as part of their wages, whilst printers, who produced nothing of value to the private market, loudly opposed such payments. A meeting of the printers' Council of Representatives, on 4 June, protested that all the measures taken against payments to workers in their own production had been ineffective and that, 'The printers who are not paid with natural products remained in a pitiful position, getting worse every day, because of the catastrophic fall of the value of money and the unbearable rise in prices of the products of consumption.'[72]

Printers were at a basic disadvantage in the unofficial market economy. The efforts of the authorities to ban payments to workers out of their own production were largely ineffective and one member of the British Labour Delegation recorded in her diary for 8 June the fact that tobacco workers had struck after payments in cigarettes had been reduced by the trade union council.

> I made very careful inquiries from different sources and it appears that these tobacco workers had been in the habit of taking the cigarettes they did not want to smoke to the speculative market and selling them at two roubles each. Other workers, who did not get their premiums in cigarettes – notably the printers and the engineers, whose premiums were not

negotiable – entered protests against this. The protests were so powerful that the central committee of the Trade Unions had to take the matter up.[73]

The dispersion of protest

The available evidence suggests that strike action remained endemic in the first nine months of 1920, although there are no reliable or complete statistics. An SR *émigré* described the change in the circumstances of Russian workers in 1920 compared with 1919. The Bolsheviks had adopted, he wrote, 'an aim which is impossible to realize, i.e. to re-establish the devastated Russian industries with the co-operation of the starving and weakened Russian workmen. Not taking realities into account they persistently follow the new line – thus rendering the economic situation of the workmen extremely grave.' He went on to quote an NKTruda document which calculated that in the first six months of 1920 strikes had occurred in seventy-seven per cent of middle-sized and large works; ninety per cent of the strikes had taken place in nationalized enterprises. Strike activity was most common in Petrograd, where there had been 2.5 strikers for every workman, whilst in Moscow the figure was 1.75 and in Kazan 1.5. Strikes were more common in the metal-working industry than the textile or chemical industries. He specifically mentioned that the Skorokhod, Obukhovskii and Izhorskii works, all in Petrograd, had suffered three or four strikes each.[74]

Soviet figures published in the 1920s confirm that strikes were widespread and followed some of these patterns, although they do generally give lower figures. In 1920 a total of 146 strikes are recorded with 135,442 participants for the twenty-six provinces covered. The average number of workers per strike was 928. This is a high figure and suggests that only large works were included in the survey. In an obvious underestimate, particularly when compared to the figures for the Petrograd province, twenty-three strikes with 12,623 participants are reported for the Moscow province. For the Petrograd province seventy-three strikes with 85,642 participants are reported, a significant increase on 1919 when fifty-two strikes with 69,625 participants were recorded. This is a high figure indeed, since at this time, according to one set of figures, which are by no means the lowest, there were 109,100 workers in the city of Petrograd and Petrograd province. The

average number of participants per strike was higher for Petrograd province than Moscow, 1173 compared with 549. In the seventeen provinces covered by the statistics, 86.3 per cent of strikes had economic motives and 13.7 per cent political. The figures do not indicate any connection between the number of participants and motives for the strike. Although the proportion of political strikes is lower than in 1919, as workers were gradually being militarized, almost any form of protest was bound to become politicized. The overwhelming majority of strikes, 73.9 per cent, were classed as having been settled completely or partially in the workers' favour. The figures show that strikes tended to be of a shorter duration than those in 1918 (there are no figures on duration for 1919) and a great deal shorter than those for 1921.[75]

Many of the strikes in 1920 followed traditional patterns and initially represented a reaction to harsh material circumstances rather than a protest against Communist Party labour policies, but food shortages could easily lead to attacks on the government trade monopoly or abuses by Soviet officials in the food supply apparatus. In December 1919 a representative of the Moscow department of the metal workers' trade union reported that 'the catastrophic sharpening of the food supply crisis has led to a spontaneous halt to work by workers and the calling of general meetings at which workers have attempted to find a way out of their starving situation'.[76] February and March, when food supplies were particularly tight, constituted one peak of unrest. Even though the food supply apparatus worked more effectively than in previous winters, Moscow experienced drastic problems with shortages and, as the situation deteriorated, discontent amongst workers escalated.

There were a number of strikes in Moscow at this time. At the end of March the Moscow Communist Party newspaper published an editorial which noted that, 'In the past days in Moscow, here and there, from time to time, strikes have broken out in individual enterprises. These strikes are connected with the severe food supply situation of workers.' It quoted the case of tram workers who had demanded a ration equal to the three *funty* of bread a day received by the bakers.[77] Demands by one group of workers for rations equal to those of another group were very common in 1920 and defused the potential political challenge represented by industrial unrest. Nonetheless, the geographical extent of the February–March strike wave is impressive. There was discontent in Nizhnii-Novgorod in early February over the unequal

distribution of rations. There was a wave of strikes in the metal works of the Maltsevskii district in the Briansk province. A leading communist admitted that 'menshevik agitation' for higher wages and better rations in early 1920 enjoyed 'some success' in Kharkov.[78]

The textile industry was badly hit by strikes. The textile workers' trade union leader, Kutuzov, reported in late February that recently there had been 'a whole series of strikes arising partly out of the food supply crisis and partly as a result of the demagogy of all kinds of dark and counter-revolutionary elements'. As a result the union had obtained 'reserved rations' for textile workers.[79] Ivanovo-Voznesensk was one province affected. Here, in the middle of January, workers at the Metallicheskii works called for the lifting of trade pickets and for measures to be taken against abuses in the food supply apparatus. By mid-February rumours were circulating in the town that only the workers were going without food and that the communists were well fed. There was talk of mass meetings of workers and the beating up of food supply officials.[80]

On 24 February a meeting of trade union and soviet representatives in Ivanovo-Voznesensk was held and extra rations were promised, including the distribution of special 'workers' ration cards' and a greater supervisory role for trade unions in food supply bodies but, despite this, on 28 February a demonstration of about 200 workers proceeded to the local soviet to demand bread. An article in the local Communist Party newspaper claimed that those involved were mainly former policemen, stall-holders and participants in pogroms. Agitation that the regime should be overthrown and that action should be taken against 'communists, yids and commissars' was reported. Elsewhere in the province, enterprises were set on fire, railway wagons were damaged and attempts were made to organize 'mass strikes'.[81]

Unfortunately, there is little information about strikes in Petrograd. The sketchy information that exists about a strike at the Putilov works in March exemplifies this. *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* reported that a menshevik supporter and metal worker, Zimnitskii, was arrested for alleged leadership of the strike and sentenced to three months' hard labour. An SR *émigré* quotes 'A Letter from the Pootiloff [sic] Workers of 8 June' which reads, 'The strike at the Pootiloff Works in April came to an end owing to the arrest of a number of strikers. We have no information as to the fate of twelve men arrested. The Extraordinary Commission [Cheka] refuses to give any information; as far

as we know they have been shot. Amongst them were: Baitzoff, I. Vershinin and others.'[82]

In early March a wave of strikes hit the Volga town of Samara. Although it was not a major industrial centre, Samara had a strong Workers' Opposition grouping, headed by Iu. K. Milonov, who was a leader of the local metal workers' trade union as well as a prominent member of the local Communist Party organization. In the early part of 1920 the local Menshevik Party organization, which enjoyed a high level of support amongst printers, was allowed greater room to manoeuvre. When the first provincial conference of the printers' trade union met in mid-February there were eight communist delegates and eight 'independents' who demanded 'freedom of the press' and 'independent trade unions'. Meanwhile the food supply situation in the town was deteriorating and the local soviet executive committee rejected a request by the local NKProd committee to reduce rations.[83] Strikes broke out shortly afterwards.

According to *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, in early March a strike occurred amongst printers in Samara when their delegates to the Third Trade Union Congress were arrested. The strike spread to other Samara enterprises, adding an increase in rations to their earlier demands for the release of political prisoners and freedom of the press. Communist sources do not contradict this information. Apart from the printers, the other major group of workers in Samara affected by strike action were workers at the Trubochnoi metal-working enterprise. At the beginning of March the local metal workers' trade union committee ordered the transfer of skilled workers to working enterprises. Tension was high in other areas. On 2 March workers at a flour mill struck to draw attention to their 'inhuman' working conditions. An article in the local Communist Party newspaper attacked the reaction of an official for handing the strikers over to the Cheka before looking into their grievances. Meanwhile, skilled workers at the Trubochnoi works were refusing to be transferred. The newspaper attacked them for refusing to do repair work at the mill that was on strike. It also reported strikes at print works and other enterprises.[84]

As elsewhere, the Samara mensheviks refused to commit themselves to supporting strike action. During the March strikes in Samara one menshevik activist, Alekseev, declared that he did not share the views of the printers but was obliged to obey the will of their meeting. A representative of the Samara Menshevik Party organization declared

that they were against 'free trade' and had no connection with the strike. *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* summed up the policy of the Samara Menshevik Party organization as support for political, but opposition to economic demands. The local Communist Party newspaper nonetheless accused the mensheviks of conducting agitation on economic issues such as supply problems. 'They play the role of "defenders" of the economic interests of the workers against Soviet power, the organs of the trade union movement and so on, representing the latter as entrepreneurs against whom the workers must conduct an economic struggle as with the former boss exploiters.' In June 1920 the entire Samara Menshevik Party committee was arrested.[85]

In fact the evidence suggests that workers in Samara, which was soon to be badly hit by famine, did not demand 'free trade' and instead called for land belonging to local peasants, who sold their produce at prices that the workers complained that they could not afford, be transferred to them. *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* also reported that printers were not satisfied with promises of better rations and demanded political concessions. At a meeting in mid-March printers voted to demand freedom of the press and to continue their strike until their imprisoned colleagues, including their leader Egorov, were released. Tension remained high after the strikes. An editorial in the local newspaper at the end of April reminded, 'all printers that they are obliged to work not less than six hours, beginning at 9 am on May Day under the sanction of trade union and comradely discipline'.[86]

Many of the strikes in 1920 were clearly a politicized response to Communist Party labour and food supply policies. One distinctive feature of the 1920 strikes was the way that the generalized campaign to raise labour productivity and discipline sometimes provoked discontent across a whole spectrum of industries. This was reflected in the most frequent slogan of striking workers in 1920 – 'bread before work!' Protest reflecting this response to the priorities of the Communist Party economic programme is to be found in all parts of the country amongst all groups of workers. For example, in the spring of 1920, at a meeting of women textile workers in the Urals town of Ekaterinburg, called to endorse an extension to the working day, a woman sent a note to the speaker saying: 'If we had enough to eat, if we had a meal and soap, we would have the strength to add these two hours. Feed us and then we will work.' These women were to organize a strike in February 1921. A worker from Tver wrote to *Gudok* in May

drawing a parallel between the position of a worker and a horse which had to be fed properly if it is to work; 'Feed us first and then demand work', he demanded.[87] Strikes that expressed open hostility to Communist Party policies became especially insistent from the beginning of May.

Strikes in 1920 were frequently a direct protest against the intensification of War Communism labour policies, the militarization of labour, the implementation of one-man management and the struggle against absenteeism, as well as food supply difficulties. The Communist Party press carried numerous articles attacking the slogan 'free labour'. The decision to turn May Day into a compulsory *subbotnik* was particularly controversial. The Menshevik Party Central Committee attacked the decision but called on workers to go to work in order to preserve unity. In Petrograd, however, the plekhanovite mensheviks, calling themselves a Group of SDs (Social Democrats), a title which they were to use again in February 1921, issued a proclamation declaring May Day a holiday: the Menshevik Party Central Committee publicly disassociated itself from it. Sixty-eight members of the Petrograd plekhanovite group, including L. Deuch and Dnevnitsky, were arrested for arranging a concert on May Day.[88]

In Moscow the trade union council declared that trade unionists who did not work on May Day would be regarded as 'comrades breaking proletarian labour discipline'. May Day was followed by a Labour Week when workers were expected to do further unpaid overtime. Workers frequently passed resolutions opposing these measures or expressing support in a half-hearted way. At a general meeting of workers at the Salmson aviation works, just outside Moscow in Blagusha, workers protested that they were hungry and that May Day was a 'holy day'. At the Sokolniki military automobile workshops workers voted on 27 April to do unpaid overtime but, after a day, when they realized they would not get a supper, they reversed this decision. Similarly, a general meeting of workers at the Moscow armaments works voted to declare May Day a holiday. On May Day a large number of workers from this enterprise did work, however. Many Moscow printers voted against unpaid overtime during Labour Week.[89]

Enthusiasm for the May Day *subbotnik* was hardly evident in other parts of the country. At the end of April a meeting of workers from a number of metal-working enterprises in Nizhnii-Novgorod was called to discuss the May Day *subbotnik*. Even though the meeting began one

hour before the end of work, many failed to turn up and even those who did refused to elect the Communist Party candidate to preside over the meeting and instead supported a worker described by the local Communist Party newspaper as a 'foreman and former SR'. Despite the calling of two votes, the resolution in favour of the *subbotnik* was not passed. Later, in May, a meeting of Sormovo workers was held after compulsory overtime on a Sunday (*voskresnik*) when the great majority of workers refused to join in singing the Internationale. The political potential of this issue was also evident in the discussions of the workers in the Sokolniki workshops in Moscow mentioned above. Even after accepting unpaid overtime non-Party workers made demands for elections to the factory committee to be held by 'secret ballot'.[90]

The outbreak of war with Poland at the end of April had a mixed impact on workers. There was a general upsurge of patriotic feeling; tsarist generals put themselves at the service of the Soviet regime and mensheviks hastened to show their loyalty. Workers also passed resolutions of support for the war effort, but the inevitable accompanying campaign to increase productivity in the relevant industrial sectors was not welcomed. As we have seen, the Tula workers reacted to attempts to raise productivity with hostility. War weariness was a powerful component in the workers' mood. At a meeting of the large Dinamo electrical engineering works in Moscow, although a resolution in favour of the war effort was passed, a speaker who protested against the fact that 'we are once again being called to butchery' received a sympathetic hearing. Workers in one Moscow bakery simply refused to vote for a resolution in support of the war effort.[91] Both the Dinamo workers and the bakers were on the brink of strike action anyway.

At the beginning of June there was a debate on food supply difficulties at a joint meeting of the plenum of the Moscow Soviet, the trade union council and representatives of trade union boards and factory committees. Melnichanskii attacked those who had caused conflicts with workers because of food supply difficulties and the appearance of Chernov at the meeting between printers and the British Labour Delegation. In debate the anarchist bakers' leader, Kamyshov, spoke of the bad position of his members and the menshevik, Dan, attacked the pickets set up around the capital to prevent private trade. The resolution of the plenum noted the measures being taken to improve food supply and decided to establish a Special Commission to

Improve the Economic Position of Moscow. However, a combination of the new labour disciplinary measures and continuing food supply difficulties were the basis of unrest at two of the capital's most important metal-working enterprises in July.[92]

In February an article in *Pravda* reported tension between workers and management at the AMO metal-working enterprise. In December 1919 workers had been given extra rations for fulfilling a military order. A worker correspondent demanded that attempts by members of the management collegium and white-collar workers to get the same rations should be rejected. The AMO factory history notes that disorders occurred from time to time in 1920, often as a result of 'menshevik' agitation: 'They would stop the machines and demand immediately their salary, bread, butter, milk and tobacco.' The Communist Party organization in the enterprise was very weak. At one large factory meeting it had been impossible to find a representative of the Communist Party cell.[93] A report in *Pravda* noted a strike on 6 July which lasted only three hours but during which a series of 'impossible' demands were put forward. The strike was blamed on 'SR agitation'.[94]

Strike action also hit the Dinamo electrical engineering works in July. The factory history describes a rise in SR and menshevik influence in the factory earlier in the year and a refusal by some 'backward' workers to help re-start production. In early summer labour discipline became a 'touchy' question. A labour disciplinary court consisting of management, trade union and worker representatives was set up. In May it was reported that agitation against labour discipline was growing stronger. The slogans of the agitators were reported to be 'long live freedom of speech and the press, down with serfdom and long live free and honourable labour'. Agitation was concentrated on the new laws against absenteeism and a protest declaration on the subject was handed in to the factory committee. *Pravda* made the sinister comment that this 'did the trade union the immeasurable favour of helping to identify the self-seekers'. As at the AMO works, the Communist Party organization in the enterprise had been criticized for its 'very weak influence amongst the workers'. In early July open discontent broke out over food supply and on 7 July workers presented the factory committee with an ultimatum. On 9 July a strike began which lasted three days. After a stormy meeting on 11 July, at which representatives of management, trade unions and workers spoke, a resolution was

passed asking the Moscow department of the metal workers' trade union and the Moscow Soviet to take 'urgent measures to improve the lot of the works'.[95]

Strike action in Moscow did not just include traditionally militant male metal workers. In February there had been agitation against tighter labour discipline amongst the predominately female workforce at the Nosov textile works. A meeting was interrupted by shouts that disciplinary measures were a return to the past and were the same as the former owners had used. On 24 May a general meeting of workers, at which 350 of the 900 workers were present (1000, including 700 women, by another account), was held at the Nosov works. At the meeting demands were made that cloth, which some declared they intended to sell on the market, be divided amongst the workers and wages be raised. A few days later a strike broke out that lasted three days and was blamed on a group of workers, both male (Grigorev, Kainlin and Samsonov) and female (Nokatova and Borisova). The latter, it was claimed, were favourites of the former owners. They called on the workers: 'Look you're starving and Soviet power gives you no bread.'[96]

These demands are typical for a sector of industry working for the consumer market. Rations were not such an important component of the income of workers in the textile industry as payments in kind which could be used to barter with the peasants for food. In the summer travel to the countryside became easier and the desire to take advantage of this opportunity is obvious in workers' demands. Thus, in July, 675 women workers at Clothing Factory No. 1 went on strike for two weeks, demanding payments in cloth, footwear and food and the same bonuses in kind which were in force in other enterprises.[97]

At this time Moscow tram workers went on strike. At the end of March hostility amongst tram workers to 'bourgeois specialists' and the intelligentsia was reported. In one tram park workers expressed discontent on the grounds that workers in a neighbouring tram park were receiving Red Army rations. During the March strikes in Moscow tram workers had been reported as demanding rations equal to those of bakers. The workers were reported as demanding the introduction of labour books to regularize the situation. Then, just as the British Labour Delegation were arriving in Moscow, 'employees of several tram parks went on strike' because of the inadequacy and unfair distribution of rations. Tram workers demanded more bread but the

arrest of 'provocateurs' was reported to have calmed the situation.[98] Tobacco processing workers went on strike at the beginning of June. Here discontent was caused by cuts made in the distribution of cigarettes to workers after complaints by printers and metal workers. The tobacco workers were threatened with withdrawal of their food rations and they returned to work on 9 June 1920.[99]

Strikes and protest by workers were particularly pronounced in the Khamovnicheskii and Zamoskvorecheskii districts which were to be the centre of demonstrations in February–March 1921. In 1921 the Goznak mint was the scene of violent disturbances. On 5 March 1920 it was ordered to be merged with the Mamontov print works which was a Menshevik Party stronghold. Workers here voted against participating in the May Day *subbotnik*, although it was reported that they did work on the day itself. The Mamontov printers turned up for overtime during Labour Week but were accused of producing very little. The weakness of the Communist Party organization in the Khamovnicheskii district was reported in June. In early July 1920 this district was the scene of 'menshevik–SR' agitation with a number of their resolutions being passed by enterprises. The mint, Mamontov print works and Tverskaia textile mill were described as 'backward'.[100]

The statistics quoted at the beginning of this section make it clear that strikes were a common occurrence in Petrograd but the study of protest in Petrograd is obstructed by a lack of information in the published sources. The main local Communist Party newspaper, *Petrogradskaia pravda*, contains few details of protest. The specific strikes referred to in SR *émigré* sources all relate to Petrograd enterprises but there is little information in published Soviet sources on these strikes. One communist memoirist recalls that strikers in the Izhorskii works in 1920 had demanded, 'The distribution to workers of items from the enterprise's production; hoop-iron, plough-shares, knives and so on' which could be bartered with the peasants for food. In general, the political situation in Petrograd was more brittle than in Moscow. G. E. Zinoviev, the Communist Party leader in the city, was more authoritarian than Kamenev, his equivalent in Moscow. Non-conformist communists, who could be more tolerant of opposition socialist parties and more moderate in their attitude to strikes, had less room for manoeuvre in Petrograd than in Moscow, and the opposition socialist parties were less able to give an organized lead to workers. All the same, Berkman and Goldman report that in May LSRs and anarchists

were distributing hand bills in the Petrograd enterprises. Menshevik agitation at the time of the May Day *subbotnik* has been noted.[101]

An article in *Petrogradskaia pravda* confirms the report of a strike at the Skorokhod shoe factory and provides information on the workers' grievances. Campaigns to tighten labour discipline were one source of unrest. In May agitation was being conducted in the factory against the introduction of labour books. There was also resistance to attempts to prevent workers receiving payments in the form of footwear produced at the factory. The Petrograd trade union council met at the end of June to consider the problem of 'disorders' at the Skorokhod factory. The meeting condemned the supply of goods from the production of the factory to workers, for sale on the market, and blamed a work stoppage at the factory on the agitation of a group 'hostile to Soviet power and the dictatorship of the working class'. The meeting called for intensified trade union and cultural work at the Skorokhod and other leather-working enterprises. At the same time, it was typical of Petrograd that it voted to allow the executive committee of the trade union council to take measures, including the 'most severe', against strikes in the future.[102]

The lack of channels through which workers could express their grievances in Petrograd, compared to Moscow, meant that suppressed protest broke out there with unexpected force in early 1921. The tense relationship between workers and Communist Party was reflected in the particularly hostile tone of the Petrograd workers' attacks on party privileges and labour policies. One aspect of this was the persistent reports of Zinoviev's unpopularity. One foreign visitor wrote the following:

> Several times during the summer, at meetings in Petrograd, he [Zinoviev] was hooted down by factory workmen. Once he appeared at a meeting wearing one of the black leather coats that are much affected by the Red Army men and commissars. He spoke of the need for the workers to make great sacrifices to assure the prosperity of the Soviet Republic. 'Suppose the fellow in the leather jacket sets us the example', shouted a voice in the audience.[103]

Berkman wrote in his diary on 2 April that it was rumoured that Zinoviev, who was officially reported as ill, had been beaten up by workers who 'had passed a resolution criticizing the administration for corruption and inefficiency'.[104] The substance of this rumour was

probably not half so dramatic but its existence exemplifies the mood in the city.

Conclusion

The harsh discipline that went with labour militarization led to an increase in industrial unrest in 1920. Measures taken against absenteeism on the railways, which restricted the workers' ability to procure foodstuffs, and the cancellation of traditional religious holidays in munitions enterprises led to serious strikes. Similarly, measures taken against unofficial sources of supply in bakeries, and the perception that those same measures were ineffective, led to strikes in Moscow bakeries and print works. As Communist Party ambitions became more grandiose, such as the attempt to enforce an All-Russian *subbotnik* on May Day and labour disciplinary courts, so confrontation with workers became more serious. The resistance of workers to Communist Party labour policies was facilitated by the resilience of enterprise and shop-floor traditions, although these same traditions limited the political impact of industrial unrest as the divisions amongst workers were exposed. However, the nature of Communist Party labour policies meant that protest, in the absence of leadership from the opposition socialist parties but drawing on the experiences of 1917, was becoming increasingly politicized.

The strains in the Communist Party's relationship with the industrial workforce had little impact on the thinking of the leadership, although many communist trade unionists opposed the new labour policies. By the end of 1920 the Communist Party faced a tense and discontented workforce. Writing in *Pravda* in early September 1920, a correspondent described the strike wave in Moscow in 1920 and its causes in perceived injustices in the distribution of rations. He highlighted in particular the high salaries being offered to specialists to work in government offices. He concluded his article with a warning: 'All this together creates a strained atmosphere amongst workers and the wave of discontent that appeared in June on these grounds has not yet dried up and threatens to have further complications.'[105]

3

The false dawn, September 1920–February 1921

Turmoil in the Party

In the autumn of 1920 the tensions created by the policies of militarizing industry boiled over and led to turmoil within the Communist Party. This was stimulated, on the one hand, by the trend towards authoritarianism in its internal affairs, the suppression of debate, arbitrary transfers of personnel, the replacement of party committees by political departments and so on, and, on the other, by the obvious hostility of many workers to its labour policies. One result of these tensions was debates about the relationship between the evolving party officialdom and rank-and-file members: the 'top–bottom' (*verkhy–nizy*) controversy. The other aspect of these tensions was an unprecedented debate about the role of the trade unions in the post-revolutionary state and, by extension, the relationship between workers, the state and the Communist Party. This mood of discontent amongst communist trade unionists and rank-and-file party members dramatically changed the political atmosphere in Soviet Russia in the second half of 1920.

At the IXth Party Conference in September the Communist Party leadership tried to defuse criticism from below by promising greater democracy in the party. The tide of opposition to militarization was so strong that at a meeting of Communist Party delegates on the eve of the Fifth Trade Union Conference, at the beginning of November, Trotsky's call for a 'shake-up' of the trade unions led an 'unprecedentedly excited' Tomskii and Ia. E. Rudzutak to rush off to the Politburo to complain. Trotsky's plans to create further Tsektran-type trade unions received a sharp rebuff at the same time and a resolution was passed calling for the restoration of 'normal methods of proletarian democracy' to trade unions.[1]

Within Tsektran the strongest opposition to Trotsky came from the water transport workers' trade union. In the run-up to a meeting of officials in the transport unions at the beginning of December the water transport workers' delegates found allies amongst some railway worker representatives who formed a Group of Ten to seek the implementation of the resolutions of the Fifth Trade Union Conference. However, the meeting turned out to be a triumph for Trotsky, whose theses on trade unions were approved, and the Group of Ten turned on the water transport workers' delegates. The VTsSPS hurried to support the water transport workers and it immediately passed a resolution calling for a separate water transport workers' section within Tsektran, the abolition of Glavpolitput and greater democracy in trade union affairs.[2] The confrontation between Trotsky and the VTsSPS burst out into the open at the end of December.

The full-scale debate that followed brought other issues that were being discussed amongst leading trade unionists to the surface. With a cease-fire with Poland in force, some of them had begun to argue that they should enjoy a much greater say in economic matters. At the Fifth Trade Union Conference a resolution drafted by Rudzutak, which attacked the way that militarization was reducing the scope of trade union influence and called for trade unions to play a greater role in production, was passed. Realizing the damage that Trotsky's conflict with the trade unions was creating, Lenin seized on this resolution with enthusiasm, so aligning himself with the trade unionists against Trotsky.

The subsequent shift away from the strident militarism of the spring was bound up with the political eclipse of Trotsky and the rise of the Workers' Opposition at the end of 1920. Whilst traditional methods of organizing production and raising productivity, such as one-man management and bonuses, continued to be aspects of Communist Party labour policy, the pressure from trade unionists for a greater role in economic decision-making led to a shift towards greater participation by low-level trade union bodies in management and new 'comradely' forms of labour discipline. Concerned by the opposition that his authoritarian measures were arousing, not only in the trade unions and the Party but outside the Party as well, Lenin withdrew his support from Trotsky when he came into direct conflict with the VTsSPS over his plan to absorb the water transport workers' trade union into Tsektran. Trotsky's eclipse was confirmed by the Eighth Congress of

Soviets, held at the end of December, which decreed a reduction in the size of the Red Army by fifty per cent.[3] There was no mention of turning over units of the Red Army to economic tasks and labour armies were now rarely mentioned in official pronouncements or the press. Although they were not abolished until the end of 1921, demobilization made it even more difficult to justify the retaining of workers and peasants in uniform and opposition to the labour armies grew.

This shift in emphasis was clearly indicated in the resolution passed by Communist Party delegates to the Fifth Trade Union Conference. The resolution reminded trade unionists that they were obliged to work 'in a military manner' but called for the widest possible scope to be given to what was to become a key word in the Workers' Opposition vocabulary – creativity (*samodeiatel'nost'*). This required 'the most energetic and systematic struggle with the degeneration of centralism and military forms of work into bureaucratic attitudes, petty tyranny, red-tape and petty tutelage over trade unions'. Tsektran was called on to adopt 'normal methods of work' and become more closely integrated with the whole trade union movement. Glavpolitput was to be abolished.[4]

The Fifth Trade Union Conference passed a resolution, 'Trade Union Production Tasks', drafted by Rudzutak, in reply to Trotsky's proposals. It reiterated, in forthright language, the need for trade unions to play a decisive role in economic decision-making. However, rather than emphasize the right of trade unions to participate in management, it stressed their role in supervising the economic apparatus which had turned 'into an enormous, in comparison with the scale of production, bureaucratic machine'. Shop-floor workers were to be encouraged to point out technical and administrative shortcomings. The trade unions were to supervise the work of the food supply apparatus.[5] In many respects this resolution reflects the concerns of moderate trade unionists, such as Tomskii and Lozovskii, who had re-joined the Bolsheviks in 1920, in its emphasis on supervision over production rather than participation in management.

To increase and co-ordinate trade union influence on the economic apparatus, economic departments attached to central- and provincial-level trade union bodies were formed, but a shortage of qualified personnel and the short time they had to develop made their impact very limited. Another aspect of the greater role being played by trade

unions in production was a revival in workers' control, expressed in support for the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate (RKI). At the Fifth Trade Union Conference the leading Workers' Oppositionist, Lutovinov, attacked the bureaucracy of the RKI, caused not only by 'old paper wolves – former Tsarist bureaucrats' but also by new red tape. He proposed a massive inflow of workers into the RKI to prepare the masses for 'administration and supervision'. At a meeting of communists in Ekaterinburg a supporter of Trotsky argued that the RKI was irrelevant to the struggle with bureaucracy but speakers from the floor disagreed strongly, supported the RKI and blamed bureaucracy on the 'mass employment of specialists in government institutions'.[6]

At the same time there was a degree of ambivalence amongst trade unionists about the extent to which they should take on responsibility for production tasks. The resolution of the Communist Party delegates to the Fifth Trade Union Conference also indicated the tensions that had developed in the relationship between trade unions and shop-floor workers. It noted that, 'Healthy forms of militarized labour are only crowned with success to the extent that the party, soviets and unions are able to explain the necessity of these methods for saving the country to the broadest mass of workers and draw in, in an organized way, their most progressive forces, to this work.' Even now a few leading communist trade unionists questioned the assumption that giving trade unions a greater role in management decisions, including those connected with labour discipline, would improve their relations with shop-floor workers. Most vocally, Riazanov argued that the paragraph in the Party programme, approved in 1919, which had called for trade unions to take production into their hands, should be repealed. This tendency was later reflected in the Platform of Ten in the trade union debate at the beginning of 1921.[7]

When the Eighth Congress of Soviets met at the end of December the open disagreements between Lenin and Trotsky led to a proliferation of platforms being advanced on the future role of trade unions. However, although Lenin appeared in November to be supporting greater trade union participation in production, and Trotsky the opposite, by a subtle process this position had been reversed by the end of December.

On 30 December a special meeting of Congress delegates and Communist Party members was called to debate the trade union question. The main reports were given by Zinoviev and Trotsky. Zinoviev

proposed that trade unions should be regarded, in the first instance, as 'schools for communism', but his basic theme was the need for caution about a rapid advance towards building a society based on communist principles. The social composition of the workforce had deteriorated and the statization of trade unions should not be rushed. He noted that attention to the material needs of workers was one way that they could be educated in a communist spirit. He also suggested that trade unions should not take on production tasks at the cost of democracy. Trotsky's speech contained no provocative calls 'to shake up' trade unions, no extravagant praise for military styles of work, and concentrated instead on the need for ordinary trade unionists to play a more active role in production. Lenin's speech showed that the trade union debate was beginning to reflect other discussions behind the scenes about the need for concessions to the peasantry. Rather than attack Trotsky for playing down the production role of trade unions, he cautiously advanced the view that trade unions should defend the sectional interests of workers.

> It is awfully difficult for us to decide what the relationship between trade unions and soviets should be. When it is said that we have a workers' state then the role of unions as sectional organizations falls away. Our economy is to a very large degree worker–peasant. Our governmental bodies – our soviets – are worker–peasant organizations and therefore the defence of material sectional interests does, to a large degree, disappear but the necessity for that defence is not entirely abolished.[8]

By January 1921 two main positions on the trade union question had become clear. Lenin and Zinoviev were joined by moderate trade unionists, such as Tomskii, Lozovskii and Rudzutak, in a Platform of Ten which highlighted the role of trade unions as 'schools for communism' with all the implications of a cautious approach to statization and an unwillingness to drop the defence of workers' sectional interests in favour of production tasks that this implied. Trotsky was joined by Bukharin, who had originally tried to act as a conciliator between him and Lenin, in a platform that no longer stressed militarization and the need to 'shake up' trade unions but, in contrast to the Platform of Ten, stressed the need for them to take on production tasks. Trotsky was now supported by a number of leading trade unionists, such as Goltsman, A. A. Andreev, V. Kossior, A. Gurevich, A. Kalnin and

members of Tsektran such as A. Amosov, E. Bumazhnyi and A. Rozengolts.[9] Nonetheless, most trade unionists did not find Trotsky's conversion to the defence of trade union rights in production credible.

Soon after, the Workers' Opposition published a platform on the trade union question. They agreed with Trotsky against Lenin inasmuch as they had as their main concern the need for workers to participate in production through their labour organizations. However, the Workers' Opposition approached the question of production tasks from an entirely different starting point than Trotsky and, in contrast to his stress on the backwardness of Russian workers, it highlighted their enthusiasm and the need to rely on their creativity. This theoretical difference, which may appear minor, had profound implications. Both Trotsky and the Workers' Opposition were preoccupied with the problem of bureaucracy, which they both blamed for hindering the establishment of communism and preventing trade unions from playing their correct role in that process, but, whilst Trotsky blamed bureaucracy on the election of inexperienced workers to administrative posts and insisted that they had a lot to learn from the old administrators, the Workers' Opposition blamed bureaucracy precisely on those old administrators whom the Party was employing in key positions.[10]

In their critique of bureaucracy the Workers' Opposition struck a chord with the widespread hostility to specialists amongst workers, whilst Lenin's relegation of trade unions to 'schools of communism' appeared to many trade unionists as a threat to their position in the regime. As the Platform of Ten began to win the approval of local party committees by a mixture of manipulation and the playing on the genuine resentment of rank-and-file communists against his record of authoritarianism, Trotsky tried to make overtures to the Workers' Opposition. The Ekaterinburg party organization had originally approved Trotsky's theses on the trade unions but on 6 February Trotsky and Zinoviev arrived in town to renew the debate. The latter was determined to reverse the local organization's decision. Stressing his new emphasis on the role of trade unions in production, Trotsky's theses went under the title 'productivist' in Ekaterinburg and his supporters included A. A. Andreev, a prominent local trade union official.

In his speech to the town conference, Trotsky described the Workers' Opposition as a growing force and said that whilst he disagreed with their attacks on militarization, 'the syndicalist deviation was a

reaction, a protest against the conservative, immobile state of the unions when they are being pushed out of production'. Even those trade unionists who had voted for the Platform of Ten, such as Tomskii and Lozovskii, were dissatisfied on this count, he claimed. Trotsky failed to make much progress with this tactic and the local trade union council and metal workers' trade union remained loyal to the Workers' Opposition.[11] Several days later a town conference of communists approved the Platform of Ten by 160 votes, with Trotsky receiving thirty-seven and the Workers' Opposition – eight.[12] No doubt militarization remained too fresh a memory to permit the Workers' Opposition to join forces with Trotsky.

Whilst serious differences were to emerge later in 1921, which were to unite trade union supporters of the Platform of Ten and supporters of the Workers' Opposition over the degree of autonomy trade unions should enjoy from the Communist Party against Lenin, the assessment that Lenin and the moderate trade unionists made of the limited interest of workers in production tasks was more realistic than that of the Workers' Opposition. Increased participation in production by trade unions brought increased responsibility for imposing labour discipline. The August decree on the reorganization of the metal department of the VSNKh called on the metal workers' trade union to take determined measures to reduce absenteeism. The metal workers' trade union Central Committee launched a campaign to reduce absenteeism in central Russian metal-working enterprises to less than fifteen per cent at its September plenum. This was after it had reached fifty per cent in some 'shock' enterprises in the summer. By the end of 1920 the union was able to report progress towards this target.[13]

The main instrument adopted to achieve this aim was the labour disciplinary courts, which had been given a major role in the April decree on absenteeism, but which had received a set-back during the Polish War. In Moscow, where they were most highly developed, they only began to work with any impact in November. Out of the 5182 cases dealt with by all labour disciplinary courts in Moscow and Moscow province in 1920, 2218 were dealt with by the metal workers' trade union. The metal workers' trade union was not the only one to use labour disciplinary courts to combat poor discipline. It was claimed that their introduction in a large number of textile works, including the Prokhorovskaia, had led to a ten per cent reduction in absenteeism. A report on the work of the courts noted that trade unions preferred

to establish labour disciplinary courts to granting disciplinary rights to specialists because, they claimed, workers respected them more than 'other coercive organs of the state' which resulted in a lower level of recidivism. Nonetheless, labour disciplinary courts led to unrest in 1920 and the exemption of specialists from their competence created the impression that they could escape 'supervision and observation from above', provoking 'the widespread discontent of workers'.[14]

The increased responsibility that the trade unions now had for raising productivity and tightening labour discipline risked further alienating workers just when they were fighting to retain their autonomy. There was undoubtedly a mood of optimism amongst some workers at the end of 1920, now that peace had arrived, and Communist Party enthusiasm was sometimes infectious. The initiative for re-starting textile enterprises had come, in some cases, from the workers themselves and it was reported that, 'The mood amongst the workers in re-started [textile] factories has completely changed. An influx of new energy and a break-through to creative work is felt.' A similar mood was reported in metal-working enterprises. It was claimed that workers in the Vyksunskii, Kulebakskii, Kolomenskii and Sormovo enterprises had raised productivity to pre-war levels. The calculations of one prominent Soviet economist appear to confirm that labour productivity grew in 1920.[15]

There is evidence to suggest that these gains in productivity were achieved simply by increasing the pressure on workers. A report on output in the factories of the 'shock' transport group of enterprises published at the end of October noted that productivity was rising faster than the number of new workers. 'On 1 October, according to the programme, there was a shortfall of 21,030 workers which, in relation to the total programme's demand for workers, amounts to 35.35 per cent or, in other words, the factories in the "shock" group are working with two-thirds the workforce necessary for the fulfilment of the "shock" programme.' The report went on to note that the situation was probably worse in reality since the actual workforce was certainly even smaller. The fears expressed in October were borne out by a report published in a metal workers' trade union journal at the beginning of 1921. The report admitted that the workforce of the GOMZa factories had not increased fast enough to enable their production programme to be fulfilled and that it had only been fulfilled by increasing overtime.[16]

The enthusiasm of trade unionists who sympathized with the Workers' Opposition for an increased role in production was reflected in the calls, which usually seem to have come from the factory or local level, for the formation of 'shock' groups of communist and trade union activists who would work in an exemplary manner and help create a new atmosphere in the enterprise concerned. This development was not viewed favourably by managers and the ensuing conflict was reflected in the debate over production propaganda that filled the pages of *Pravda* at the end of 1920. The limited extra scope that low-level trade unionists gained to participate in production showed that such activists, including supporters of the Workers' Opposition, could often be out of touch with the opinions of shop-floor workers.

The debate over production propaganda was opened by V. Smirnov, a former Left Communist, who wrote at the beginning of October on the need to overcome workers' apathy. He went on to quote approvingly the resolution of a meeting of Communist Party activists from the Donbass town of Lugansk on production propaganda. These theses called for the Party's policy towards labour to go beyond bonuses and punishments with enterprise Communist Party cells arranging regular meetings at which management would report to workers on the condition of the enterprise. Communists should be organized into a 'shock' group whose attitude to work would set an example to other workers. The factory committee would form a special commission to assess the work of the 'shock' group and norms would be set accordingly.[17]

It is not surprising that the deputy manager of the Dinamo works should have written an article in November attacking the idea of production commissions and factory committee commissions in general because they 'interfere in production and obstruct management'. Interest in the debate widened, and Iu. Larin and the Main Administration for Political Education supported the idea of production cells and commissions whilst Bukharin proposed that production propaganda should be confined to agitation and information. L. Sosnovskii, a leading supporter of Trotsky, proposed the awarding of medals and foodstuffs to veteran workers to create 'something like a cult of such remarkable heroes of labour'. This proposal was dubbed a 'Table of Ranks' and 'something a merchant would think up' by the Workers' Opposition.[18]

Whatever the theoretical considerations involved, the end of 1920 did see the practice of holding meetings, at which managers gave

reports to workers, become common. However, although the view that production propaganda should be confined to agitation and information won out, the enthusiasm of communist workers on the shop-floor for 'shock' groups and production cells did not diminish. At a meeting in the Sokolniki district orators from the floor urged the formation of production cells in all enterprises and special factory committee commissions to control the work of management. The chairman of the local transport workers' trade union called for workers to 'observe and supervise the activity of management through their local committees in order to learn how later to take over the management of their enterprise'. A group of local railway workers' trade union activists reported to *Gudok* that they had begun 'flying checks' on administrative and technical bodies in November.[19]

It is symptomatic of the gap between communist ideology and workers' aspirations that workers sometimes used production meetings to raise grievances about their material position rather than make suggestions about improving the efficiency of their enterprise. In the middle of December *Pravda* reported two meetings in Moscow at which, as part of the production propaganda campaign, directors had reported to the workforce on the work of their enterprise. At the Moscow furriery workers shouted 'Down with the communists!' and at one metal-working enterprise an ex-SR caused a commotion with his complaints about abuses in the distribution of boots.[20]

Many of the reports of a dramatic change in the attitudes of workers at the end of 1920 and of an upsurge in labour enthusiasm and consciousness can be attributed to supporters of the Workers' Opposition who used them to justify a greater reliance on 'comradely' forms of labour discipline, under the supervision of the trade unions, and a greater role for the trade unions in management. As the trade union debate crystallized at the end of 1920 Lenin and the supporters of the Platform of Ten argued the opposite; that the working class had been exhausted by the Civil War. As discontent amongst workers became more and more difficult to ignore, Lenin went further and began to argue that the consciousness of the working class had deteriorated. Lenin believed that the contraction in industrial production had forced workers 'to enter the economic sphere as a speculator or small-scale producer'. As a result, he suggested, workers had become 'declassed'.[21]

Lenin's analysis had a superficial logic but it was based on a false

conception of working-class consciousness. There is little evidence to suggest that the demands that workers made at the end of 1920 for an end to abuses in the food supply apparatus and the lifting of the trade pickets represented a fundamental change in aspirations since 1917. Soviet historians have sought to substantiate the existence of 'declassing' by finding evidence for changes in the social make-up of the industrial workforce after 1917. O. I. Shkaratan has suggested that there was a reduction in the proportion of 'cadre' workers in enterprises during the Civil War. He has gone further and linked 'declassing' with industrial unrest in early 1921. 'The facts show that there is a direct link between changes in the structure of the working class and a certain lowering in the level of its consciousness. This was shown with particular clarity during the days of the February/March "*volynki*" of 1921.' Shkaratan's analysis of the industrial protest of early 1921 has led him to attribute it to the presence of elements in the enterprises with close links to the countryside.[22] In fact, an analysis of the industrial unrest of early 1921 shows that long-standing workers were prominent in protest.

In his assessment of the backwardness of Russian workers, Lenin was in agreement with Trotsky. They differed in that Trotsky argued that this assumption need not hinder progress towards a communist society if coercive labour policies and specialists were applied, whilst Lenin argued that the exhaustion of the industrial workforce required effective material incentives. Both agreed that the backwardness of Russian workers meant that political repression would have to remain and even be intensified. Only the Workers' Opposition suggested that Russian workers had not become 'declassed' and that greater scope should be allowed to worker creativity. Its theses on trade union tasks submitted to the Xth Party Congress read 'the great masses of producers have been educated and ideologically prepared by the trade unions in the belief that the real defence of the class interests of the producers is based on the victory over ruin, in the restoration and raising of the productive forces of the Republic'.[23] The Workers' Opposition saw Russian workers through a Marxist framework, and a utopian one at that, which assumed that they sought to play a greater role in management as part of building a communist society.

The gap between the policies advocated by communists of whatever strand of opinion and the aspirations of workers at the end of 1920 was not just the result of the blinkers imposed by Marxist ideology on

Communist Party thinking, but also the attenuation of the base of the Party on the shop-floor. In 1917 the Bolshevik Party had had a mass membership amongst workers which, however distorted, provided a means by which the opinions of workers could be communicated to the leadership. By the end of 1920, the Communist Party no longer had a mass presence on the shop-floor as rank-and-file members had been mobilized into the Red Army or promoted into management positions. In October 1919 fifty-two per cent of Communist Party members were workers in terms of their social origin but only eleven per cent of Party members were employed in industry, and many of these would have held managerial positions.[24] The policies of the leadership had accelerated this process by causing significant numbers of worker-communists to leave the Party. By the end of 1920 there were few communists left on the shop-floor and they included a high proportion of inexperienced enthusiasts and utopians.

Some historians have argued that the mass promotion of workers into managerial and administrative posts satisfied a basic aspiration of workers and gave the Soviet state a degree of legitimacy in their eyes. In the Western historiography this interpretation has been applied most frequently to the early Stalinist period and has given rise to an explicitly social history of the Revolution. In the Soviet historiography the same argument has been applied to the Civil War period.[25] Many workers were appointed to posts in the new state apparatus after October 1917, although so were many officials and specialists from the old regime, but it is doubtful whether this did much to improve relations between workers on the shop-floor and the Communist Party. Whilst it was a demand of the Workers' Opposition that more workers be promoted into executive posts, they were also concerned about the way that promoted workers were liable to lose their link with the shop-floor and adopt the mentality of a manager or commissar. A new word was coined to describe this process. Such ex-workers had become commissarized (*zakomissarovalis'*). In later years such complaints disappeared, partly because the New Economic Policy saw the introduction of less authoritarian styles of management, but also because growing political repression made it impossible even for communists, such as those in the Workers' Opposition, who had an overriding commitment to workers on the shop-floor, to express views unwelcome to the Party leadership.

Economic optimism

The mood of optimism which prevailed in Soviet Russia in the autumn of 1920 was even more intense than in the spring. Not only had the regime finally destroyed the threat of internal organized armed opposition with the evacuation of Baron Wrangel's White Army from the Crimea, but it had rebutted the Polish invasion. As a result, extensive new territories in western Siberia, the northern Caucasus, southern Ukraine and the western borderlands came firmly under its control. The foreign recognition that had only been a hope in the spring was now finding concrete expression in treaties with the Baltic states and a trading agreement with Great Britain. Optimism stemmed partly from the euphoria of victory, but also had an ideological component: the belief that Soviet Russia was on the threshold of creating a communist society. On 29 November a decree was approved that nationalized all industrial enterprises down to the smallest. The abolition of money was eagerly anticipated and an attempt was made to put together a moneyless budget. On 4 December the SNK abolished all payments for rations, on 17 December all payments for consumer goods and on 5 January 1921 all payments for housing and communal services, such as public transport.[26]

The mood of optimism in the Communist Party about the possibility of a rapid advance towards a communist society, implicit in the rise of the Workers' Opposition and in Trotsky's proposals to statize trade unions, was reflected in economic policy. If Trotsky had suggested that transport was the key to the regeneration of the country in the spring, electrification was the basis for the national economic plan that Lenin put forward in the autumn. Trotsky's four-stage plan was replaced by one which envisaged pushing forward on all sectors and in all regions. It was widely believed that the capture of Turkestan, with its supplies of raw cotton, and the Donbass coal-field opened up broad economic perspectives. Trotsky defended his record and made exaggerated claims for the success of his policies on the railways. At the Eighth Congress of Soviets he claimed that the implementation of Order No. 1042 had gone so well that the original five-year plan could be completed in three and a half years. The Congress passed a resolution on transport which declared that the problem of transport paralysis which had faced the country in previous winters was not a danger for the winter of 1920–21 and that 'the improvement in the

condition of the railways creates an adequate support for the further persistent and organized efforts towards the complete recovery and development of the ways and means of communications in the Soviet Republic'.[27]

At the end of 1920 the Soviet government inaugurated an ambitious plan of economic expansion that led to a temporary industrial revival. A Soviet historian has summed up the picture.

> In the autumn of 1920, after the Civil War, a certain upsurge in production, both in light and heavy industry, can be noted. In the Donbass the production of coal in December was twenty-seven per cent higher than in October, the metallurgical works in the south and the GOMZa works were working better. The number of textile enterprises grew significantly between September and December and the same occurred in the leather-working, glass and other sectors.[28]

Moscow was one focus of economic expansion. The Kolomenskii works, which had been operating in a desultory fashion, was put into full production in the summer. The Podolsk locomotive repair works was given a ceremonial re-opening in mid-December with over 2000 skilled workers in its workforce. Further expansion of the enterprise was promised. Marking the comprehensive nature of the expansion programme, the textile industry in Moscow and Moscow province was given a major boost. The Prokhorovskaia mill was re-opened at the beginning of September with a satisfactory number of workers. In early October a massive programme to re-start sixty-five textile works in the Moscow province was announced. A month later it was reported that twenty-seven textile works had been re-started in the Ivanovo-Voznesensk province.[29]

Expansion was not confined to the Central Industrial Region. In the Urals:

> factories that had not worked since the time of Kolchak began to work. In November at the Verkhne-Isetskii Works the rolling and punching of roofing iron was resumed. On 2 November, after years of not working, the open hearth furnace at the Izhevsk works was started. In the southern Urals the blast furnaces and open hearth furnaces of the Asha-Bulashevskii works, the blast furnaces of the Katav-Ivanovskii works, the reflecting furnace and two sheet rolling mills of the Tilianskii works and the rails rolling shop at the Ust-Katavskii works began to work again after more than a year.[30]

Despite its distance from sources of fuel and foodstuffs, a number of enterprises were re-started in Petrograd. For example, at the beginning of October the STO called on the VSNKh to take all measures to restore production at six electrical equipment enterprises in the city. Similarly, great efforts were made to restore production in the mines and metal works of the Donbass. In December Trotsky began a campaign to strengthen the work of the local mine workers' trade union, which was headed by his supporter, A. Kalnin. The local economic body responsible for the coal industry was headed by G. L. Piatakov, another supporter, who promoted ill-thought-out expansion right through 1921.[31]

Towards the end of 1920 workers began to return to the factories and the size of the national workforce ceased to decline and even showed signs of expansion. E. G. Gimpelson has estimated that the size of the industrial workforce (excluding railway workers for whom figures are incomplete) grew from 1.4 million in 1919 to 1.5 million at the end of 1920. Another Soviet historian, Iu. A. Poliakov, has argued that the 1920 figure should be increased to 1.6 million. Specific cases appear to confirm the view that the size of the workforce grew at the end of 1920. The key GOMZa group of enterprises reported an increase from 44,563 workers in September 1920 to 52,817 in December, and the Petrograd Heavy Industry Group an increase from 12,012 in October to 12,982 in December. As a result of the demobilization of the Red Army and the work of the Urals Committee for Labour Conscription, the metal-working industry of the Urals received 6000 workers between December 1920 and February 1921. It was even argued that in some metal works the shortage of skilled workers was being tackled. Many workers were still being rounded up by the armed detachments of the local commissions for labour conscription but some came voluntarily after promises of re-started enterprises and regular food supplies.[32]

Despite the fashion for greater trade union participation in management and 'comradely' forms of labour discipline, coercive measures were still the central feature of labour policy. Militarization and mobilizations were the chief methods for ensuring labour discipline and the supply of workers to enterprises. In the summer militarization was reinforced by a STO decree of 13 August that militarized 76,632 workers and employees engaged in nineteen enterprises in the 'shock group working for transport'. They included such major enterprises as

the Briansk works and Sormovo works. Militarization was extended to a wide range of industries – paper-making, rubber production, wood-working, Urals factories and so on.[33]

Furthermore, measures were now taken to intensify the mobilization of workers who had abandoned their factories and fled to the countryside. On 20 August the STO approved a decree mobilizing workers formerly employed in eighty-six enterprises in sixteen provinces, consisting of enterprises from the 'shock' metal-working and 'especially important' groups. According to this decree, all former workers were obliged to register in preparation to being assigned to an enterprise. Workers who tried to avoid this measure were to be regarded as 'deserters' and were 'to be punished by the same measures as those applied to deserters from military service'. To cut down on the number of exemptions granted by local bodies, all such requests were now to be considered in Moscow. Ever more senior age groups were made subject to labour mobilization. On 13 September the SNK approved the mobilization for 'labour purposes' of citizens aged between 32 and 34.[34]

Optimism about the prospects for a rapid advance towards a communist society was also reflected in food supply policy. The key to a solution of the chronic food supply crisis was a break with the system of grain requisitioning and the state monopoly of trade in foodstuffs but, as the most critical food supply months of early 1921 approached, there were few signs of any move in this direction. Indeed, false optimism about food supply prospects pushed policy in the opposite direction. At the Fifth Trade Union Conference A. I. Rykov, the chairman of the VSNKh, reported that the country's fuel situation was twice as good as in previous years and added, 'The state of grain procurements this year is more than satisfactory, in comparison with past years.' At the Eighth Congress of Soviets in December there were moves towards much greater state control over the production of grain with the decision to set up sowing committees.[35]

The increasing amounts of grain procured towards the end of 1920 were not only a factor in creating famine conditions, as peasants reduced their sowings as a response to requisitioning, but in provoking widespread peasant uprisings. The most famous of them broke out in the Tambov province in the autumn of 1920 under the leadership of S. A. Antonov, an SR. Antonov owed his success to the establishment of Unions of the Labouring Peasantry in the villages as an organizational base for his campaign. By the beginning of 1921 he had a force of

50,000 men. Antonov's operations prevented grain procurements over a large area and cut railway communications. K. V. Gusev has described how peasant uprisings delayed the delivery of grain to Moscow for three weeks in February and March 1921. Besides the economic impact of peasant uprisings on workers through interruptions in grain-supplies, it is also possible that there was some political influence. Many workers had contacts in the villages which the barter economy of War Communism had strengthened. Furthermore, the Riazan–Uralsk railway, which facilitated the establishment of communications between different groups of workers, ran through the Tambov province. At the time that Saratov workers were meeting to discuss a general strike in March 1921, large parts of the surrounding province were under the control of peasant partisans.[36]

Optimism about production was bolstered by faith in the capacity of the NKProd to collect and distribute supplies. Exemptions from call-up into the Red Army granted to NKProd officials and the demobilization of soldiers to work in the NKProd were increased. Trade unions were urged to give the NKProd their support. The new harvest and heavier quotas did bring some relief. The metal workers' trade union reported that the calorific value of the food distributed, per month, to each worker in the GOMZa group in 1919 was 16,565, in the first half of 1920 it was 24,563 and in the second half it was 37,022.[37]

The only serious alternative to existing policies came from a leading member of the Workers' Opposition who had long experience of political activity amongst workers. When Shliapnikov returned from an overseas delegation at the end of 1920 he continued to advocate a decentralized wages system based on localized exchange to realize peasant surpluses and provide a firm basis for the supply of foodstuffs to workers. In contrast to the spring, he persuaded the metal workers' trade union to adopt this as union policy, and it received its fullest development in a resolution of the plenum of the union's Central Committee held on 21–23 January 1921. This called on the presidium 'to set as its most urgent goal the setting of a real living income for workers in the metal-working industry by the utilization of local supplies not procured by the NKProd and by increasing the funds for supplying workers with foodstuffs at the cost of the demobilized part of the army'.[38] Unfortunately, this decision came too late to have any impact on Communist Party policy.

As a rule, the optimistic mood encouraged those who wished to clamp down on private channels of food supply. When a foreign sympathizer asked M. M. Lashevich, a leading Petrograd communist, how he intended to deal with speculation, he responded, 'I shall have the covered markets pulled down and the crowds dispersed! There you are!' This attitude was fuelled as much by ideological fervour as over-optimistic statistics. At the beginning of December a representative of Moskommuna, the Moscow food distribution body, lamented to a plenum of the Moscow trade union council the large shortfall in the amount of foodstuffs his organization should have received and then went on to demand that more trade unionists be drafted to work in the NKProd and the Sukharevka market be closed. The plenum obliged and resolved 'to proceed to the complete liquidation of the Sukharevka and other points of free trade and orders unions to conduct agitation for the abolition of the Sukharevka'. On 15 December the Moscow Soviet agreed and ordered the closure of the Sukharevka.[39]

A similar course of action was adopted in Petrograd. At the beginning of October the head of Petrokommuna, the Petrograd food distribution body, wrote to Lenin complaining about the failure of food supplies to arrive in the city and the lack of stocks to distribute to workers and soldiers. Yet, in the middle of November, the trade pickets were extended to operate not only on the stations in surrounding villages, but also on the tracks to the stations themselves. Till then they had only been effective on the Baltiiskii railway but now they were to be introduced on the Primorskii railway in Sestoretsk and along the Irinovskii line to Shlisselberg as well. The private markets were closed down as Lashevich had promised. Dan describes how the markets were still lively in January and then, one month before the introduction of the NEP, an order was issued to demolish their premises. This led to a number of markets being 'levelled to the ground'. Similar policies were implemented elsewhere. For example, at the end of September there was a call to close the private market in Ekaterinburg.[40]

The other major change in food supply policy, a move away from the application of the 'shock' principle in the supply of foodstuffs, also reflected optimism about food supply policies and the general decline in Trotsky's prestige. The clearest signal of this change came at the Fifth Trade Union Conference after he had been sharply rebuffed for his call to 'shake up' the trade unions. The NKProd speaker told the conference

that 'in the light of the famine level of food supply resources NKProd bodies have constantly had to, and will have to in the future, in the first instance, supply those categories of labour by which are created those commodities necessary for the reconstruction of the national economy' but the delegates resolved that there should be 'a steady transition to the equalization of the position of different groups of workers and their corresponding trade unions'. There were new efforts to clamp down on payments to workers from their own production. On 14 October the SNK cancelled all agreements between the NKProd and 'various bodies and organizations' about the distribution to workers and employees of items from their own production.[41]

The decision to move away from 'shock' supply was also part of the general trend to increase the role of the trade unions in economic decision-making. Trade unions had gained the right to set production norms and wage rates in 1918, but since rations were a much more important part of a worker's income, the authority of trade unions in this area had been undermined. The system of 'shock' supply gave priority food supplies to certain enterprises without regard to the industry-wide tariffs painstakingly drawn up by the unions. The position of trade unions in this area was also being usurped by outside bodies, usually connected with the military, increasing their irritation. The move away from 'shock' supply was therefore an important trade union victory. Trade unions had also continually called for food supplies to be linked to a worker's production or the naturalization of wages. The introduction of bonuses in kind was regarded as a convenient way to do this and in the summer trade unions were granted a decisive say in their implementation.

On 8 June the SNK approved a decree on the implementation of bonuses in kind, which had been drafted by a commission under the chairmanship of Goltsman, giving the VTsSPS a decisive role. A Department for Setting Labour Norms, which was attached to the VTsSPS or one of its local bodies, was to be set up. The VTsSPS was even assured that any discussion on the subject should be in the presence of its representatives.[42] This decree represented a considerable consolidation in the production role of trade unions and was regarded as a step towards their statization. On the other hand, it opened up serious divisions between trade unions since it implied that individual trade unions were strictly subordinate to the VTsSPS in this area. Not surprisingly, many trade unionists expressed hostility to such a central-

ized system of bonuses and, since the whole system of 'shock' work and economic planning in general depended on centralization, the subsequent debate had wide implications.

At the plenum of the VTsSPS held on the eve of the Fifth Trade Union Conference at the end of October, Goltsman put forward proposals to remove the right to set wage rates and production norms from individual trade unions entirely and centralize it in the VTsSPS and provincial-level bodies. He argued that this was necessary to ensure 'the introduction of a union-wide wage scale and the systematic and organized transition to the naturalization of bonuses and wages in general, with some flexibility for 'shock' work being retained where necessary, and within the capacity of the existing food supply and goods fund of the republic'. However, Goltsman's proposals were rejected by the plenum after speakers had attacked them as leading to the 'bureaucratization' of the wage-setting apparatus and of 'shackling work'.[43]

At the same time Goltsman's proposals, which had been approved by the metal workers' trade union Central Committee, were rejected by the Fourth Conference of the union. Instead, the conference called for a commission of trade unionists who knew the real position in the factories to be appointed to help the presidium draw up new theses and strongly rejected the centralization of tariff departments as it 'undermines any possibility of the correct regulation and supervision of tariff work according to profession and the situation in the localities'. A plenum of the union Central Committee promptly overturned this decision at a meeting on 1 November.[44]

The rules governing bonuses in kind had already been laid down in 'Temporary Regulations on Bonuses in Kind', approved by the SNK on 23 October 1920. These rules unambiguously obliged the setting up of a centralized system. The key paragraph read, 'The overall quantity of items liable to be distributed to the workers and employees of an enterprise (the bonus fund) is set for each month by the department for setting labour norms attached to the province level trade union body or rural district bureau of trade unions at the request of the factory management in accordance with the degree to which the production programme has been fulfilled.' Even more significantly, it called on the NKProd to give priority to the creation of a central fund of foodstuffs and consumer goods. The decree specifically forbade local initiatives by repeating the ban on the distribution of supplementary rations which might have been negotiated with an enterprise. The

ineffectiveness of this ban was indicated by the fact that it had been embodied in another SNK decree only ten days before the publication of the decree on bonuses.[45]

The crisis in relations between the Communist Party and workers that was building up was doubly perilous for the communists not only because of the extent of the gap between their policies and reality, but also because they now carried exclusive responsibility for any shortfall in the delivery of rations to workers. Workers' complaints increasingly centred on Communist Party policies, either on the trade pickets or abuses within the food supply apparatus, although the food supply crisis was not worse than in previous years. Similarly, the suppression of unofficial sources of supply increased sensitivity to those privileges which remained in the rationing system, particularly the privileges enjoyed by Communist Party officials and specialists. Perhaps it is not surprising that talking to traders, including workers, at the Sukharevka market in the summer of 1920, Goldman should have heard the view that the communists, having chased out the old masters, had become masters themselves. In mid-September, a meeting of women workers in Moscow was reported as being concerned with, 'Why, in Soviet Russia, when the labouring people are in power, so many dishonourable people occupy responsible posts, there is so much injustice at every step – the food supply counters and railway stations: the communists have put on riding breeches and boots and the workers go around in bast sandals.' At the IXth Party Conference in September 1920 Zinoviev noted popular discontent over privileges enjoyed by specialists and Party members and continued,

> I have had the opportunity to observe our Petrograd comrades. I think that their mood is the most indicative. Now the slightest inequality grates with the workers ... we must explain that we are living through a transitional period and that we have to put up with a certain degree of inequality amongst officials in general and in the party in particular.[46]

In February 1921 protest by workers forced the government to take action to abolish these inequalities.

Disillusionment

The mood of extreme optimism, and even utopianism, which was so strong amongst communists at the end of 1920, was occurring when,

in reality, the country was beginning to suffer its worst famine for thirty years and when industry was barely functioning. As Alec Nove says of Lenin at this time: 'he seems to have gone right off the rails'. The gap between the expectations of communists and the desperate situation which workers faced in their everyday lives did not escape the attention of all contemporary observers. G. I. Miasnikov, who was expelled from the Communist Party in 1921, described Petrograd as a 'Potemkin Village'.[47]

In the light of the disastrous collapse of the railway network in the winter of 1920–21, Trotsky's claims at the Eighth Congress of Soviets about the successful implementation of Order No. 1042 appeared farcical. Dan described what happened in Petrograd which, being at the end of the supply lines, was the first to be hit. 'In November–December, in accordance with the economic programme, many factories were started up. Fuel and raw materials were allotted but not two months had passed by when, as usual, it turned out that there had been a mistake in the programme. Allotted fuel and raw materials had to be re-assigned and work began to stop.' In December Petrograd's order for coal was cancelled because of difficulties in the Donbass. Desperate measures were ordered. At the end of December a Five Days of Fuel Self-Supply, to begin on 2 January, was declared. Three-person commissions were formed in all enterprises to chose which workers should go and collect firewood. Whilst this went on, factories were to stop work and the remaining workers were to clean and repair equipment.[48] In practice, fuel weeks only further alienated workers. Dan commented, 'One industrial measure, "fuel weeks", did not help matters. They only embittered workers who were chased for tens of miles into the forests without warm clothing, without bread, without axes and saws, without any hope of transporting away what they cut.' Such improvised measures could not improve the city's economic position. In December and January Petrograd required 600 wagons of firewood a day: it received an average of 200.[49]

The industrial life of the city began to grind to a halt. On 18 January the executive committee of the Petrograd Soviet decreed that in view of there being two holidays in the coming week, all enterprises in Petrograd should close on 19–23 January. More enterprises, including print works with 1938 workers, were closed at the beginning of February. Even this was not enough. On 11 February the Petrograd Soviet ordered the closure of ninety-three enterprises, with 21,000

workers, including 17,809 metal workers, till 1 March. They included such important works as the Putilov, Sestoretskii and Treugolnik. Bringing home the crisis, electricity to the soviet building was cut off and the lights went out whilst it was debating the proposal.[50] Although Moscow was hit by fuel shortages as well, it was closer to the sources of supply and there do not appear to have been any major factory closures. Even so, workers were mobilized to clear snow from railway tracks, unload wagons and collect firewood.

The hopes for an improvement in food supplies were not realized. The Petrograd food supply organization, Petrokommuna, was able to raise rations at the beginning of January to two *funty* of bread a day for workers in hazardous occupations, one and a half *funty* for those in 'shock' enterprises, one *funt* for workers in group 'A' enterprises and half a *funt* for those in group 'B' enterprises. However, on 22 January newspapers reported a cut in rations by one-third in Moscow, Petrograd, Ivanovo-Voznesensk and Kronstadt. In Petrograd the bread ration was now only half a *funt* a day. In Moscow a representative of Moskommuna reported, in early December, that only 612,000 *pudy* of foodstuffs had been received over the previous three months instead of the required 2,106,000 *pudy*.[51] To make matters much worse the measures taken to suppress unofficial sources of food supply caused free market prices to leap. The price of black bread in Petrograd tripled between January and February and rose a further fifty per cent in March.[52] Dan described the desperate food supply situation that developed in Petrograd.

> The food supply situation also deteriorated every day. Bread (half to one *funt* a person) and, occasionally, a little granulated sugar, that was all that was distributed as rations. What was more, bread was far from being distributed every day and what bread! Getting hold of something on the black market was impossible: not everyone could get to the Sennaia [the Petrograd Sukharevka], and after all how many 'goods' were there. The trade pickets raged and it was impossible to obtain anything for money, even from speculators. The situation with bread was especially bad. The workers were starving. The soldiers were starving as well. I had to go to work past the barracks and each time I would be stopped in neighbouring streets about ten times by soldiers literally begging a 'little piece of bread' or proposing the exchange of a lump of sugar from their miserable ration for bread.[53]

The October decree on bonuses in kind began with the instruction

that 'it must be hung in a prominent place in the enterprise' to encourage workers to expect real rewards for higher productivity. Such hopes were in vain. V. V. Shmidt, giving the VTsSPS presidium report to the Fourth Trade Union Congress, explained why.

> The allotment [of the bonus fund] was impossible to implement for two reasons: firstly because there was an unusual amount of red-tape involved in receiving bonuses and, on the other hand, the extremely harsh food supply situation locally, to a considerable extent, excluded the possibility of the real implementation of this fund. Local NKProd agencies and bodies were frequently required to distribute this fund not in the form of a bonus but in the form of the usual regular ration.

The system was abolished by the SNK at the end of April although it had broken down some time before then.[54] The tensions that the breakdown in the bonus system created were exacerbated by the fact that workers now almost invariably received their rations in the workplace where the frustration of individuals could easily lead to group protest. A komsomol (communist youth league) activist in Petrograd described the situation in mid-February 1921:

> Formally the factories had closed but people came to work as before because of habit built up over many years and the fear that a worker who stayed at home would not receive a ration. The management did not decide to evict workers from shops that were not working and day after day in frozen, silent shops the workers' spirits fell and discipline disintegrated.[55]

The response of most trade union officials when faced with complaints about food supplies was to blame the NKProd and hint at abuses and even sabotage. The response of a trade union official to miners in the Ekaterinburg region complaining at their failure to receive a full ration was typical:

> The fault lies with your local officials – why have they not tried to ensure that you receive your bread on time? Send real representatives of the working class there. Choose workers, the best workers from amongst you. Purge the food supply organs of all the counter-revolutionaries who have attached themselves and then you will receive all thirty-six *funty*.

Such attitudes were expressed at the centre as well. At the Fifth Trade Union Conference the report by the NKProd speaker 'drew forth a series of sarcastic notes frequently of a demagogic character. From

some of them such a stagnant odour of demagogy came forth that the reporter could do nothing except shrug his shoulders and pass over without a reply.'[56] Such suspicions and attacks struck a chord amongst workers and were frequently taken up by the Workers' Opposition, which demanded greater supervision of NKProd bodies by trade unions and shop-floor workers.

Economic optimism proved to be false and by the end of 1920 relations between the Communist Party and workers were on the verge of a most serious crisis. Even before the *volynka* in February 1921 the tense situation was sapping the confidence of communists. One particularly worrying problem was the outflow of 'workers at the bench' from the Party. Zinoviev noted this phenonomen at the IXth Party Conference in September 1920. Robert Service has described how data on party membership at the end of 1920 was no longer issued in many cases. In Ivanovo-Voznesensk province party membership fell from 5500 in March 1920 to 2900 in September. This process he ascribes to 'straightforward political disenchantment'.[57]

The growing influence of the Workers' Opposition, whose very name betrays the mood in the Communist Party, was one aspect of the strain in Communist Party–worker relations. Their influence within the Communist Party was far greater than the eighteen votes (out of a total of over 700 delegates) which its platform received at the Xth Party Congress. There were few local Communist Party organizations that did not have supporters of the Workers' Opposition, although there were just as few where they had control of the organization, and the party leadership decreed that elections to the congress should be 'by platform', which meant that minority groupings were under-represented. In debates at the congress supporters of minority groupings complained at the way the party leadership had stacked the cards against them. A. Kollontai claimed that whilst it was stated in her manifesto, The Workers' Opposition, that 1.5 million copies had been printed, in fact, only 1500 had been produced and then 'with difficulty'.[58]

Workers' Opposition agitation against specialists and abuses in the food supply apparatus struck a chord with the views of many workers and probably helped to provoke industrial unrest over these issues. The consequences for party unity and relations with the workforce were a source of serious concern to the party leadership. However, the threat that they represented was limited by the alienation of workers

from the trade unions which had been augmented by the increased role that they were playing in production. The increased role of trade unions in production enjoyed the active support of the Workers' Opposition. Of much greater significance, of course, was the psychological inability of the oppositionists to break party discipline and support non-Party workers against the Party's policies.

After the summer of 1920 the mensheviks and the SR(Minority) continued to attempt to act as a constitutional opposition. By the autumn of 1920 the disbanding of the Moscow print workers' trade union, the arrest of SR(Minority) deputies to the Petrograd Soviet and the mass arrests of mensheviks in Kharkov and elsewhere had undermined this approach. At the end of November the former head of the Menshevik Party organization in Samara reported that since July it had ceased to exist and after consultations with other members it had officially disbanded itself. In emigration, Chernov became more receptive to the idea of co-operation with Liberals. I. Vardin has described how opposition amongst mensheviks to Martov's conciliatory line became stronger towards the end of 1920.[59] The opposition parties were faced with a dilemma since Communist Party repression had both increased the influence of those who advocated a less uncompromising attitude to the communists and rendered them almost completely incapable of mounting a challenge.

In out of the way places mensheviks showed ingenuity in using what legal opportunities there were to increase their influence. In Vitebsk a Committee for the Struggle with Unemployment that had started its own leather-working enterprise with thirty workers was set up by mensheviks, SRs and Popular Socialists. As might be expected, this initiative owed something to divisions amongst local communists. When the Vitebsk mensheviks were being rounded up in the summer of 1921, *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* reported that ex-members of the Jewish Social Democrats (Bund), the majority of whose members had voted to join the communists in early 1920, were working to secure the release of local political prisoners.[60]

The leadership of both the mensheviks and SR(Minority) clung to the idea of constitutional opposition. In Moscow, in December 1920, a conference of the SR(Minority) attracted thirty-eight delegates and a resolution was passed which 'rejects any attempts to oppose the left socialist revolutionaries to the ruling Communist Party'. On this basis the Party set out plans to expand its activity and succeeded in unifying

other small LSR groupings.[61] As shall be described, Dan's activity in Petrograd during the *volynka* shows that the moderate line was still strong amongst many mensheviks and some of the menshevik activity in support of strikers, here and elsewhere, can be ascribed to the plekhanovites. The disintegration of the opposition parties was symbolized by the emigration of Martov and Chernov at the end of 1920. However, in Petrograd, Moscow and Saratov individual mensheviks and SRs did sometimes play a leadership role in protest by workers in early 1921.

By the end of 1920 a mood of extreme hostility amongst workers to the Communist Party dictatorship was developing. At the Xth Party Congress in March 1921 Trotsky mocked Zinoviev's pessimism about the attitude of workers and his view that if the Congress of Producers, which the Workers' Opposition proposed should run the economy, was allowed to meet, the Communist Party would receive only one per cent of the delegates. Trotsky commented that this was a 'monstrous exaggeration' but continued, 'It is necessary to comprehend, so to speak, the revolutionary historical primacy of the party, which is obliged to maintain its dictatorship despite temporary, spontaneous wavering, even amongst workers. This leads to the realization of the need for unity.'[62]

Infected with the utopian mood of the country's leadership, with their hopes for better times dashed and without organized channels for the expression of their grievances, workers became prey to wild rumours and apocalyptic moods. In 1920, in the village of Vyritsa outside Petrograd, a certain I. Churikov formed a commune based on the structure of the komsomol, even down to the principle of 'democratic centralism' [!], which attracted a certain following amongst worker youth. The sect of Churikovtsy, or Sober-ones, set themselves the goal of restoring the morals of youth at a time of demoralization and decay. The sect held mystical ceremonies and regarded Soviet power as the antichrist, and called on its members to build paradise.[63] An epidemic of cholera in Ekaterinoslavl in the spring of 1921 led to rumours in the workers' suburbs that it was God's punishment and God's curse. Miracle-working icons appeared in the huts of railway and factory workers, leading to a wave of religious hysteria. The Cheka took a hand in the matter and guards of armed communists were placed around the icons. An investigative commission was set up which found that the miracle-working icons had all been recently restored

with foil and gold paint which gave out an unusual effect. A former icon painter, a priest and a person who refused to identify himself were shot.[64] In mid-September a rumour went around Moscow that there was a 'secret decree' that domestic fowl were going to be requisitioned which had led to the mass slaughter of chickens, geese and piglets 'before the inspector came round'.[65] At the time of the *volynka* in Moscow and the Donbass peculiar rumours were rife.

A particularly odious element in the reaction of workers to prolonged starvation and repression was a noticeable revival in anti-Semitism. One foreigner made the following observation in 1921.

> A significant illustration of the state of public opinion with regard to Jews was shown by the reception given to a vaudeville act at the Nikitskaia theatre last summer. It was a skit in which a Red and a White officer come out onto the stage and engage in a rough and tumble fight for the possession of the throne at the back of the scene. After the Red Officer has given the Monarchist a good hiding, he turns around to take his seat on the throne and finds perched on it a little Jew, who has sneaked in meanwhile and taken his seat there.[66]

A group of Jews that Goldman spoke to in the summer of 1920 blamed the communists for the rise in anti-Semitism.

> Under the tsarist autocracy the pest had been limited to the most reactionary elements. Now all sections of the country are infected by it. The peasant, the worker and the intelligentsia all saw in Jews the communists and commissars responsible for punitive expeditions, forcible food collections, militarization and intimidation. Bolshevism was an impetus to Jew-baiting, they insisted, rather than a safety valve against it. Increased anti-Semitism, a return to the churches, anti-revolutionary feeling on the part of the peasantry and the workers, the cynicism of the young generation and sinister manifestations were the result of the failure of the Bolsheviki to keep the solemn promises made by them during the October days.[67]

To an extent anti-Semitism was a continuing aspect of Russian popular attitudes. In spring 1921 Cheka agents were warned not to see in Zionism 'a sort of world-wide Jewish sanhedrin, which has set itself the task of over-throwing all monarchies, creating a single kingdom and choosing a single Tsar'. At the Third Trade Union Congress Bukharin could not resist referring to Dan's arguments as 'Talmudic rubbish'. Dan was, of course, Jewish. For the most part the Bolsheviks

adhered to the traditional socialist principle of toleration for religious minorities and even made allowances for Jewish religious observances. In Moscow in April 1920 special flour was made available for the production of Passover bread which led to resentment in the general population even though it was explained that the flour given to the Jews would be deducted from their rations.[68]

Conclusion

Tension between the Communist Party and workers was steadily mounting at the end of 1920. There are few reports of open confrontation between workers and communists in the last months of 1920, either in Soviet or non-Soviet sources. An improvement in labour relations could have been anticipated in the autumn as this was the time when enterprises traditionally re-started after the summer break and the effect of the new harvest could be felt on food supplies and prices. In fact, although there were few cases of open protest in the last few months of 1920, the situation was not as calm as it appeared and workers continued to nurse many grievances. The way that these grievances were expressed varied from region to region. In Moscow the trade union and inner-party controversies were prominent features of the political life of the city, and workers, to a degree, were able to articulate their discontent through official channels. In Petrograd unrest festered under Zinoviev's authoritarian rule and the opposition had difficulty making itself heard in the trade union and party debates until dissatisfaction exploded in February.

In February and March 1921 industrial unrest broke out in a nationwide wave of discontent or *volynka*. General strikes, or very widespread unrest, hit Petrograd, Moscow, Saratov and Ekaterinoslavl. There were disturbances in the Urals and Donbass. The only major industrial region that appears to have been unaffected was Ivanovo-Voznesensk. Most significantly, workers made economic demands that hit at the heart of the regime's programme and occasionally made demands for political change. Labour protest did not consist merely of isolated outbursts of anger. *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* wrote the following about the events in Petrograd.

> Gatherings and mass meetings in factories, the carrying of harsh resolutions directed against the policies of the Communist Party authorities:

> repressions (lock-outs) by the government provoking a mass strike movement in solidarity with the victims carried over into street demonstrations, crowds of thousands of workers (Lashevich himself talked of a crowd of two and a half thousand workers), 'a dispersal by military units' whilst defending themselves against the soldiers with sticks and stones. In short, the typical picture of a mass worker movement with a definite political character – of the sort that each of us has observed so many times in Russia.[69]

The metal workers' trade union journal summed up succinctly the fundamental cause of the crisis.

> Successes on external and internal fronts set many heads spinning and, under the impression that there was a wonderful fuel and food procurement balance at the end of 1920 and of too rosy prospects for 1921, our industry was given a sweeping expansion with a running start that did not correspond to real conditions. We were cruelly mistaken and our hopes and calculations for fuel, food and partly for raw materials missed the mark.

On 12 February *Pravda* published an editorial which warned of the 'heaviest defeat on the labour front'.[70]

4

The *volynka*

Terminology

The industrial unrest which erupted in Soviet Russia in early 1921, spread by small numbers of activists and rumour, encompassed most of the country's industrial regions. Although it may be an impression created by the nature of the sources, events in Petrograd were particularly impressive in their organization and the scope of the demands raised. If the limited coverage the Petrograd *volynka* has received in both the Western and Soviet historical literature has, at least, established its existence, it has tended to treat it as a prelude to the Kronstadt revolt and not as a phenonomen in its own right. This does the *volynka* an injustice since it did not merely precede the revolt but was one of the factors which persuaded the sailors to mutiny. The fact that it was a workers' *volynka* should lend it its own drama, just as the revolutionary traditions of Kronstadt (where workers also played an important role) has created its symbolism. The *volynka* was the product of a specific tradition of protest by workers that had developed before and after 1917 and had its own political character. Furthermore, it was in response to the *volynka*, and not the Kronstadt revolt, that the decision to abandon the policy of grain requisitioning was first made public.

The significance of the industrial unrest of early 1921 has been obscured by the language used in the Soviet literature. There are two words in Russian – *zabastovka* and *stachka* – that are translated as 'strike'. The former refers to a localized dispute, usually with purely economic demands, whereas the latter refers to a strike which extends to more than one enterprise, often with political overtones. *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* refers to the workers' protest of early 1921 as a 'strike movement'. In their writings contemporary communists or later Soviet commentators usually employed the word *volynka*, which means only

a 'go-slow'. Dan explains the use of this terminology: 'The bolshevik press carefully tried, at first, to hush up the movement, then to hide its real size and character. Instead of calling the strike a strike, they thought up various new terms – *volynka*, *buza* and so on.'[1]

The unwillingness of Soviet observers to call the industrial unrest of February–March 1921 a strike movement partly explains why it was not reflected in the relevant statistics. However, the political turmoil of those months appears to have led to a wider breakdown in the collection of such data. A contemporary study of the work of revolutionary tribunals noted that many provinces did not return statistics at all in the first half of 1921. Those figures that were collected show that a high number of cases were being dealt with.[2] Some of the enterprises involved in the *volynka* were hardly working and perhaps the word strike, in the narrow sense of a withdrawal of labour, does not convey the various forms that workers' protest took. The *volynka* needs to be rescued from obscurity by historians, but the continued use of the term can be justified not to hide its significance but to show that workers' protest consisted not just of strikes but also of factory occupations, 'Italian strikes', demonstrations, mass meetings, the beating up of communists and so on.

Petrograd

The chronological outlines of the Petrograd events can be reconstructed with some degree of certainty despite the paucity of sources. 'Breaches of labour discipline' were already occurring in January and early February. At this stage unrest could be assuaged by promises of action. On 12 January there was a stoppage in the foundry of the Arsenal works when workers put forward economic demands. They returned to work after explanations by the factory management. On 13 and 14 January there was a stoppage in another shop in the same enterprise. On 20 January there was 'a collective refusal to work' at the Polliuostrovskii works and on 21 January laundresses at the Laundry No. 1 stopped work. On 8 February the machine shop in the Baltiiskii works stopped work, causing the whole enterprise to halt work for two days. A return to work was brought about by the intervention of I. I. Lepse, the chairman of the Petrograd committee of the metal workers' trade union.[3]

At the beginning of February strikes were becoming an everyday

occurrence. Soviet historians mention that there were strikes in the first half of February at the Baltiiskii, Kabelnyi, Arsenal, Trubochnoi, 1st Tabachnoi (Laferm) and Diumo works. S. N. Semanov summarized the demands made to the Petrograd trade union council by the Diumo, Baltiiskii, Kabelnyi and Arsenal works. He notes that they called for better food supplies and put forward 'a unanimous demand' to abolish or restrict the activity of the trade pickets. The use of mobilized labour and controls on small-scale trade were attacked.[4] At a plenum of the trade union council a representative of the Lesner works in the Vyborg district complained of the failure to supply closed enterprises with rations and fuel. A. M. Antselovich, the chairman of the trade union council, visited the enterprises concerned to calm the workers. He reported back to the council that workers were complaining about the distribution of work clothing. Summing up their mood, he said that they told him 'not to make promises he could not fulfil but to explain the true situation'.[5]

The potential of this predictable unrest to develop into something more serious was already apparent. On 26 January the Arsenal works factory committee had reported to the Presidium of the Petrograd trade union council,

> January is ending and no foodstuffs have been distributed to the workers. Bearing in mind their critical position, as regards food supply, we ask you to take energetic measures to satisfy them urgently. Demands by the workers have already been made several times but there is no possibility of satisfying them in spite of the most decisive steps that we have taken on this question. A sad picture could come about for which we take no responsibility.

At the beginning of the third week of February the situation rapidly deteriorated. On 21 February a meeting of the Communist Party provincial committee was warned that a demonstration was in the offing and Zorin, Zinoviev's deputy in his absence, was removed from his post as secretary. Semanov noted that 'events had already, to a certain degree, got out of the control of the Petrograd leadership'.[6]

Agitation for more substantial action was particularly strident in the Vasileostrovskii district, one of the most important industrial districts in the city. Amongst the largest enterprises located in this district were the Trubochnoi metal-working enterprise, the Laferm tobacco works, the Baltiiskii ship-building and repair yards and the Kabelnyi and Gvozdilnyi metal-working enterprises. P. I. Usanov, an activist in

the Vasileostrovskii district komsomol organization, described in his memoirs how, 'mensheviks and SRs now began to call mass meetings in the factory shops. These meetings went on without the knowledge and participation of factory bolshevik and trade union organizations. Communists and representatives of soviet organizations wanting to appear at such meetings were not allowed to speak.'

It is not possible to say with any certainty why agitation was pronounced in this district, although there is some circumstantial evidence. It was reported in the main Petrograd newspaper that workers had expressed frustration over delays in their journeys to work caused by problems with the trams. More significantly, the Vasileostrovskii district Communist Party committee had been agitating for communists to play a greater role in raising productivity and, in mid-December, it had called for the creation of more 'shock' groups headed by communists. The most likely explanation for the strength of the agitation in this district lies in the existence of groups of anti-communist activists. The Trubochnoi works had been a centre of anti-bolshevik activity in the spring of 1918 and was again in February 1921. At this time, out of over 1000 workers in the enterprise, only seventeen were members of the Communist Party. Usanov reported that Antselovich had been dragged from the platform when he tried to address a meeting at this enterprise.[7]

At the end of 1920 the hopes of workers at the Trubochnoi works for an improvement in food supplies, along with those at the nearby Baltiiskii and Kabelnyi works, had been raised after the Vasileostrovskii district Communist Party committee called for it to be designated as a 'shock' enterprise. The reduction in rations at the end of January must have been a particular disappointment. Berkman reports that the main grievance of the Trubochnoi workers concerned the distribution of winter clothing and a widespread belief that communist workers received better supplies than non-Party workers.[8] On 21 February a meeting of workers was held at the Trubochnoi works and an anti-communist resolution was passed. On 22 February there was persistent agitation for a strike at the Laferm works that was headed off by a group of communists including K. I. Nikolaeva, the head of the Petrograd Communist Party women's department. The Petrograd Soviet executive committee now ordered the closure of these enterprises and a purge of their workforce. At the Arsenal works in the neighbouring Vyborg district, where 1309 workers were employed, work

had stopped and a meeting, at which Antselovich had to speak and 'calm' the workers, was held on 23 February.[9]

The atmosphere during these days is graphically conveyed in Usanov's memoirs. Antselovich and the secretary of the Vasileostrovskii district Communist Party committee managed to speak at a meeting of workers at the Baltiiskii works and they persuaded them to pass a resolution in which they agreed to work for two weeks, at the end of which, if the bread ration had not dramatically improved, the whole enterprise would strike. The author commented, 'In those difficult days such a decision was regarded as a victory for us.' Usanov was then sent to report the decision to the Trubochnoi workers.

> A meeting had been droning on since eight o'clock in the morning. I arrived at 1.00 p.m. Representatives of the Petrograd committee of the Communist Party and Petrokommuna were present at the meeting. The mensheviks and SRs who had ensconced themselves in the presidium [of the meeting] would not allow either to speak. What was to be done? Go up and say directly, 'I am an organizer of the komsomol district committee – Let me speak!' No that was useless. I found in the crowd the organizer of the factory collective of communists, Nekliudov, to ask his advice. 'Say that you're from the Baltiiskii works', said Nekliudov, 'perhaps you'll slip through. As you can see it is useless for us to try. We've been brought to a dead end. Whatever happens we'll defend you.'

After persuasion Usanov spoke to the meeting and reported the decision of the Baltiiskii workers, which he claims caused many workers to think and divided them 'in two'.[10]

A revolutionary three-person commission was formed by the Vasileostrovskii district Communist Party organization to deal with the deteriorating situation. It was headed by the secretary of the district committee, Amenitskii, the head of the committee's organization department, Sirotinskii, and a worker from the Baltiiskii works and deputy to the district soviet, Ingelman. The pressure of the crisis told on the last two members who were soon replaced by 'more decisive, experienced comrades including the head of the Petrograd officer training school, Kazanskii'.[11] The situation was getting out of the control of the communists and, despite its closure, workers from the Trubochnoi works organized a street demonstration which was joined by workers from other enterprises, such as the Baltiiskii works where they were holding an 'Italian strike' – an occupation in which the workers left their machines on to waste fuel. Dan described the scene.

> The movement ... especially on the Vasilevskii island ... began to spill onto the streets: huge crowds of workers and the odd sailor from craft moored on the Neva (including the famous Avrora which, in the October days of 1917, had fired on the Winter Palace) and soldiers gathered. Unofficial orators gave speeches and the crowd went to those factories which were still working to persuade the workers to join the strike. The movement attained such a mass character that it met a response in the whole city. On the Nevskii Prospect, as in the bygone days of the revolution, little groups began to gather where the bolshevik regime was loudly criticized with unheard of, until them, audacity. Effusive people even assured me that there was a feeling of February 1917 in the air.[12]

Pitirim Sorokin, the famous Russian sociologist who was also a member of the Right Socialist Revolutionaries, wrote in his memoirs that on Thursday 24 February a large demonstration, formed mainly of workers from the Trubochnoi and Laferm works, tried to cross over to the main part of the city as in 1917. He gave the following graphic description of the scene. The demonstration 'was strikingly akin to the scenes of the March Revolution of 1917. The same cry for bread, the same demand for liberty of speech and the press, only this time the banners read "Down with the Soviet". Children running around merrily sang popular songs satirising the government.' A popular parody of the 'International' ran thus:

> I am sitting on a barrel,
> Barrel turns about ...
> The Cheka makes us quarrel,
> Let us send it to the devil ... .

Sorokin's account continued, 'On the Nicolaevsky bridge the demonstration met communist troops who opened fire and dispersed the workmen.'[13] Usanov, who was closer to events, gives this account. The demonstration began amongst workers from the closed Trubochnoi works in the workers' suburb on the western side of the island, by the docks. It appears that the demonstrators, who numbered only around 200 to 300 out of the over 1000-strong Trubochnoi workforce, planned to make their way to the closed works premises situated on the far north-east of the island, known as Golodai, and proceeded up Kosaia Liniia street towards the main Bolshoi Prospect. Presumably they intended to occupy the works and start an 'Italian strike'. At this point the demonstration was swelled to 2000 to 2500 people by large numbers

of workers from the nearby Baltiiskii works and groups of students and sailors. At the top of Kosaia Liniia the demonstrators were blocked by half a company of communist officer cadets who had strict orders not to open fire.

> They tried to stop the advance of the electrified crowd but were swept aside in a few minutes. The crowd moved off along Bolshoi Prospect. Attempts by communists and members of the Komsomol to stop them were not crowned with success either. Surrounded by people in a hostile mood, crazed by SR-menshevik slogans, we agitated, persuaded and appealed to them, trying at every step to stop the movement. Only a little distance from the premises of the Communist Party district committee, where the Revolutionary three-person commission was housed, did we create an impassable barrier. The crowd marked time for a long while, pushing against us as against a dam. From all sides cries rang out, orators made speeches but there was no armed confrontation.

Eventually the crowd by-passed the barrier and broke into several groups. One group headed north towards the closed Trubochnoi works, persuading the Laferm workers to join them on its way. They reached the Trubochnoi works late in the day when they had, for the most part, dispersed through fatigue or the harassment of Communist Party activists and officer cadets. Another group, numbering 300–400 people, headed to the Deriabinskii barracks where, at midday, prisoners were released, guards disarmed and arms and ammunition seized. They then proceeded towards the Nikolaevskii bridge to cross over to the main part of the city, but when they drew near the bridges were swung open. Even so, 300–400 demonstrators crossed the river on the ice. They went westwards past the closed Novo Admiralteiskii works and persuaded workers at the Zhorzh Borman confectionery works to join the strike and occupy their factory, from where they were eventually evicted by local communists. Small groups, ten to twelve persons strong, went to other enterprises, including the Putilov works, where they began to agitate for a strike.[14]

At some point it seems that shots were fired on the Vasilevskii island. Most Soviet accounts do not mention or deny killings. Semanov wrote that after the attack on the barracks officer cadets were ordered into the district but did not shoot and that the only shots came from the demonstrators, who wounded an officer cadet. Goldman reported that the officer cadets fired in the air 'to incite the crowd' but denies that there was any return fire. In general, she noted that there was a

concern amongst some communists that the treatment of the workers had been rough.[15] Neither of these accounts are entirely convincing but the reality was less important than the belief that quickly spread through the city that workers had been shot. Dan's description of events helps explain how the situation appeared to the rest of the city.

> From a window I observed how infantry and cavalry detachments of officer cadets with artillery moved along the Nevskii Prospect onto the Vasilevskii island against the sullen silence of the public. The officer cadets were also unhappy. The scene was uncommonly foul. After several hours, going up to the Senate building where the revolutionary historical archive was kept, where I was working, I heard shots from the Vasilevskii island. Soon people appeared shouting that they were shooting workers on the island; that there were many killed and injured. Fortunately this information was not confirmed. Even the officer cadets refused to shoot into the crowd: all the shots were in the air. This naturally only encouraged the workers; the meetings and demonstrations spread into the other districts.[16]

On the afternoon of 24 February an extraordinary meeting of the bureau of the Petrograd Communist Party committee was called. The meeting took a number of emergency measures. A special command was formed, made up of Lashevich, Antselovich and Avrov, to be based in a fortified district. Special three-person commissions made up of party and military representatives were formed in each district and the rural districts outside the city. Martial law was declared through the Petrograd Soviet executive committee and a curfew which forbade movement after 11.00 p.m. was promulgated. The Soviet decreed that special battalions to maintain order in all districts and special three-person commissions in all enterprises were to be formed. Emergency measures were taken to improve conditions in army barracks. Arrests of leading menshevik, SR and other opposition socialist activists were ordered. The closure of all light entertainment theatres was ordered. Those theatres that were permitted to operate had to start at 6.00 p.m. rather than 7.00 p.m. In each district the three-person commissions organized patrols of reliable troops, officer cadets, and communist, komsomol and trade union activists to report on the situation and conduct agitation. On 26 February the Petrograd Soviet plenum met and issued an appeal which admitted the justice of workers' complaints but attacked in strong terms 'the enemies of Soviet power – mensheviks, SRs and White Guardists'.[17]

With this clamp-down the accounts of non-communist observers become unreliable and vague. Dan himself was arrested late on 26 February but his description of events had become sketchy before this. Sorokin's account was sensationalist. He alleged that, 'On 26 February a great demonstration occurred in the centre of the town, on the Nevskii Prospect, and this time so many people were killed that the government had completely suppressed the uprising.'[18] Although an attempt to demonstrate on the Nevskii Prospect is plausible and 26 February did mark the high-water mark of the *volynka*, there is no confirmation for this claim.

Soviet sources describe how the dispersal of the demonstration on 24 February and the rumours of shootings led to widespread agitation for a strike. In the Vasileostrovskii district anti-communist workers and strike activists were being purged from the closed Trubochnoi and Laferm works under the supervision of a military soviet. The workforce in the former was reduced by some 200 to 860 and a similar number left the Laferm with a workforce of 1438. Some work restarted in these enterprises but the strike was more or less solid in the Vasileostrovskii district. The Gvozdilnyi works 'followed the Baltiiskii in everything' and was hostile to the Communist Party. The Kabelnyi works joined the Baltiiskii works in demanding the release of prisoners. The Osipov works, a leather-processing works, also struck. Only the Finliandskaia wharves kept working.[19]

Protest spread from the Vasileostrovskii district to the industrial heart of Petrograd – the Vyborg district. Here, on 25 February, Kalinin addressed a meeting of the Novyi Lesner workers and persuaded them not to strike but a resolution demanding freedom for peasants to bring in their goods to the markets and the establishment, in the enterprise itself, of a commission to supervise food supplies was passed. A meeting of workers at the Metallicheskii works sent a delegation to Antselovich to ask for an explanation of events. Elsewhere in this district the situation was also disturbed. The Arsenal stopped work and sent a delegation to Antselovich and requested that Kalinin come and address them. Even though a resolution to return to work was 'approved', workers refused to do so. The Nobel works also stopped work, as did the Rozenkrantz works. At the Petronitka textile works a resolution attacking Communist Party food supply policies was passed but work did not stop.[20]

Saturday, 26 February, marked the high point of the *volynka*. In the

Moskovskii district the Skorokhod works stopped work, followed by the Pobeda works, whose workforce generally looked to the former for a lead. On the same day the great majority of the workers at the Rechkin wagon repair works and the 17th Printing works struck. In the same district the 1886 Power Station was affected by stoppages. In the Obukhovskii district, at the Obukhovskii works, on 26 February, only 200 workers, stokers, machinists and plumbers, turned up for work, and they went home at 3.00 p.m. The following day a picket of 150 workers was organized and threatened anyone going in. On Monday 28 February a large crowd of workers gathered outside the factory gates and only let lighting and water supply workers through. At 9.15 a.m. they tried to open the gates to hold a meeting and 2000 workers got in. Management and a revolutionary three-person commission persuaded them to disperse. On the same day workers at the Novo-Admiralteiskii and Staro-Admiralteiskii works did not work. At the latter enterprise workers went home at 1.00 p.m. At the former enterprise the strike was led by the main shop. In the Shapochnaia works workers in the men's hat department struck. Elsewhere in the 2nd Gorodskoi district workers did not strike.[21]

At the Putilov works in the Narvsko-Petergofskii district there was agitation for a strike. However, the workers were slow to act and did not strike until Monday 28 February, when the peak of the *volynka* had passed. Two large chemical works in this district, the Tenteleveskii and Treugolnik, continued to work. Only metal workers in the metal-working and repair shops of the Treugolnik discussed the possibility of a strike. In the less industrial districts of the city, 1st Gorodskoi, Volodarskii, Porokhovskii and Smolinskii, workers did not strike. Semanov mentions that the mint and the Nevskii paper-making works also suffered strikes. The Petrograd events had a response in the surrounding region. There were disturbances in enterprises in the neighbouring Pskov and Novgorod provinces where communists were mobilized to explain that grain requisitioning would soon be abolished.[22]

The military clamp-down, mass arrests and other coercive measures, such as the closure of enterprises, the purging of the workforce and stopping of rations which accompanied them, appear to have been effective in combating the *volynka*. However, it was concessions to workers' demands that marked the turning-point. On 24 February the main Petrograd newspaper published an announcement that a special

distribution of rations would take place within two days. On 27 February a proclamation that grain requisitioning was to be replaced was published.[23] This was the first clear indication that a break with War Communism was in the offing. Although the trade pickets were not lifted until 1 March, the announcement had an immediate impact on the *volynka*.

By Monday 28 February the peak of the *volynka* had passed. A number of large enterprises, the Rechkin, Putilov, Baltiiskii, Obukhovskii and others, were still not working even though some workers went in. On 8 March four to six enterprises were reported as still being 'in a state of *volynka*', but it had always been an unequal struggle. Goldman described her feelings.

> The workers were determined, but it was apparent that they would soon be starved into submission. There were no means by which the public could aid the strikers even if they had anything to give. All avenues of approach to the industrial districts of the city were cut off by massed troops. Moreover, the population was in dreadful want. The little we could gather in foodstuffs and clothing was a mere drop in the ocean. We all realized that the odds between the dictatorship and the workers were too uneven to permit the strikers to hold out much longer.[24]

The patchiness of the sources means that it is much more difficult to reconstruct the workers' demands, the inter-play between different groups of workers and the role played by opposition socialist parties than the chronology of the Petrograd *volynka*. However, it is clear that the demands of Petrograd workers centred on food supplies. They went beyond simple demands for more rations and, reflecting an appreciation of the weakness of their economic position *vis-à-vis* the peasantry, pinpointed two main problems – the trade pickets and abuses and privileges in the food supply apparatus. Therefore, when it is claimed that workers' economic demands could be summed up by 'free trade', it should be interpreted in a limited way and not that they were simply a replication of the demands of peasant rebels.

The main demand of Petrograd workers was the lifting of the recently strengthened trade pickets which were not only depriving the private market of foodstuffs, but were also preventing workers' own unofficial efforts to obtain supplies. Dan noted, 'In the factories and works confused agitation started up. The workers gathered to discuss the situation and all their demands centred on the question of

removing the trade pickets and permission for free trade in provisions.' A crowd outside the Laferm works was reported by Usanov to be discussing free trade and free passage out of the city to get potatoes.[25] However, it is important to note that when workers demanded free trade they were not demanding completely unregulated commerce in foodstuffs, but rather that those aspects of the Communist Party food supply policy, such as the trade pickets that created shortages and put up prices, be reformed. A resolution of the Skorokhod workers exemplifies this.

1. Exert all efforts to improve the food supply situation and better organize the Petrokommuna;
2. Petition for free passage in a 150 *vërsty* radius and in the near future start up the largest number of suburban trains; and
3. Review the composition of the trade pickets and petition that foodstuffs are not taken away from workers when it has been established that they have the right to transport goods. Apart from this, increase the amount of foodstuffs that can be transported. Because of lack of time it was decided not to elect delegates to the session of the Petrograd Soviet.[26]

Workers' demands also centred on abuses in the food supply apparatus. As the above resolution shows, it was not just the irrationality of the trade pickets that concerned workers, but also the unjust way in which they carried out their business. Similarly, Antselovich reported that when he visited enterprises where there had been 'breaches of labour discipline' at the beginning of February he received 'complaints at the incorrect actions, at the chaotic disorders of some institutions in the matter of supply of workers with foodstuffs and consumer goods'. An important factor in provoking protest was not only corruption in the distribution of supplies but also resentment at the privileges received by communists. Goldman reported that there were rumours amongst workers that whereas their rations had been cut, communists had received fresh supplies of shoes and clothing.[27]

Workers' demands also reflected discontent with labour discipline that sometimes betrayed strongly anti-communist overtones, which is not surprising since they had long been bullied by 'shock' groups and fuel three-person commissions in which communists played a leading role. The position of Communist Party cells in the enterprises was deeply resented. Dan observed that, 'Along with the demand for free

trade, other slogans began to be advanced gradually: the abolition of Communist Party cells in factories and works, which played a purely policing role and had received the nickname of *komishchiki*[28] from the workers; freedom of speech; free elections to the soviets and so on.'[29] A resolution passed by workers at the Arsenal works in the middle of the *volynka* contained the following demands.

1. abolition of privileged rations for specialists and soviet officials and their equalization to the level of the workers;
2. freedom of speech in the workers' press;
3. abolition of the system of appointments and greater use of elections;
4. in order to raise productivity, the emancipation of workers – free labour will be more productive than forced; and
5. abolition of all artificial divisions amongst people according to their membership of the Communist Party and their evaluation according to the work that they contribute to society in order to express respect for the person of the toiler.'[30]

Characterizing the political demands advanced by workers during the *volynka* attracts particular problems because all observers saw what they wanted. For communists it was 'Soviets without communists!'; for Dan it was 'Free soviets!'; and for plekhanovites it was 'The Constituent Assembly!'. Of course it is possible that all the slogans were present but the evidence only allows us to make tentative judgements about their relative popularity.

At its most rudimentary there was a great deal of resentment against the Communist Party dictatorship. There is little evidence to corroborate the claim made by many communist commentators and historians that the slogan 'Soviets without communists!' was widespread. Indeed, one Soviet historian gives an ingenuous explanation for this: 'taking account of the mood of the workers, the demand for free elections to the soviets meant the implementation in practice of the infamous slogan of soviets without communists'. There does seem to have been a genuine mood in favour of greater political tolerance and freedom, as evidenced in the demands of the Arsenal workers for greater freedom of the press and more elections. Sorokin reported that workers demanded a wide range of civil rights, freedom of speech, assembly and so on.[31] Another indication of this mood is Usanov's account of how, when 'mensheviks and SRs' tried to prevent him speaking to the Trubochnoi workers, he persuaded them to allow him

to go ahead by threatening to tell the workers that they were trying to reintroduce tsarist censorship. Dan claims that the slogan of the Vasileostrovskii district workers was free elections to soviets. 'Free elections to the soviets (not at all soviets without communists as Bolsheviks later palmed us off with) as the first step towards substituting the rule of democracy for dictatorship was the usual political slogan.'[32] The Constituent Assembly also figured in workers' demands. Like the official mensheviks, the plekhanovites, who still supported the Constituent Assembly, were not immediately enthusiastic about the *volynka* but they did find a response to their slogans.

Although it is open to the accusation of taking the lowest common denominator, the main political demands of Petrograd workers during the *volynka* could be summed up as follows: strong resentment against the Communist Party dictatorship and support for basic civil rights, including free elections to the soviets and the Constituent Assembly. At the same time, it must be admitted that political demands were subsidiary to economic demands, as the decline in unrest after the decision to abolish grain requisitioning shows. There was spontaneous political protest, but to sustain such political protest groups of activists and established forms of organization were required and these had proved to be vulnerable to the communists' efficient repressive apparatus.

Soviet historians and contemporary communist commentators have justified the suppression of the *volynka,* and their refusal to allow it the name of a strike, by claiming that it did not represent the true aspirations of workers. In background discussions such writers usually refer to the growing percentage of women in the Petrograd workforce and the large number of soldiers and peasants mobilized into factories. One Soviet historian comes to the following conclusion: 'A number of documents confirms that it was labour-mobilized workers, women and adolescent workers, that is the petty-bourgeois mass and the least conscious, the part of the working class the least tempered by the revolutionary struggle, who gave in to counter-revolutionary provocation in the first instance. They carried away with them some cadre workers.' Another sums up the situation by blaming the strikes on peasant discontent, which was transferred to the factories by these social groups, and fanned by menshevik, SR and anarchist agitation.[33]

There is some evidence to back up this view. When Antselovich reported to the Petrograd trade union council on strikes in the first

half of February he quoted specifically discontent with work clothing amongst workers, mostly unskilled, in 'hot shops' and women and adolescent workers. He commented that, 'It is no secret that work clothing has played the role of "agitation clothing" for our enemies. It is impossible to consider normal a situation where workers in hot shops do not have the correct clothing, similarly where women and adolescents are engaged in heavy work.' The position of these groups of workers was made worse by their position at the bottom of the shop-floor hierarchy and it appears that they did put pressure on those in authority to re-distribute rations from privileged workers. An article in the main Petrograd newspaper attacked those workers who were calling for equality in rations and reported that some factory committees were distributing special rations for workers in 'hot shops' amongst all workers.[34]

On the other hand, it is difficult to make a convincing connection between the presence of mobilized workers from the Red Army and protest. The total number of such mobilized workers in Petrograd enterprises at the beginning of 1921 was only 3203 with none at the Trubochnoi works where the *volynka* began. There were 209 at the Franko-Russkii works and 250 at the Izhorskii works which were not prominent in the unrest. On the other hand, there were 400 mobilized workers at the Baltiiskii works and 420 at the Rozenkrantz works which were strike centres. It is interesting to note that Red Army mobilized workers were not necessarily raw peasants. Of the 400 Red Army mobilized workers at the Baltiiskii works, 350 were made up of the '2nd Reserve Engineers Battalion', many of whom would have been skilled workers.[35]

Whilst the grievances of mobilized Red Army workers, tied to jobs far from their homes without the contacts necessary to survive in the War Communism informal economy, are easy to understand, evidence suggests that it was long-standing workers who took the initiative in protest action. Whilst there were relatively large numbers of Red Army mobilized workers at the Baltiiskii works, the strike that occurred there on 8 February began in the machine shop, where skilled workers would have been concentrated, causing the whole enterprise to stop work for two days. A press source tells us that the Putilov works was a major recipient of mobilized workers. Most mobilized workers were being sent there at the end of 1920.[36] However, the Putilov works only joined the *volynka* at a late stage and then the initiative came from skilled

workers. One contemporary observer, whilst noting the appalling conditions suffered by Labour Army workers, suggested that they were less likely to initiate protest.

> Red Army workers arriving from the front are lacking in everything, in beds, in mattresses, tableware, at least nothing apart from two small glasses which is all they are given (by the Commission for Improving the Conditions of Workers). At first the Red Army worker is shocked to the extent that he flings his hands out in astonishment and then laughs. In general a smile in conversations with friends is the usual reaction to shortages and the failure to distribute goods and *volynki* because of food supply difficulties. There is not that hardened, petty-bourgeois horror because they have failed to distribute herrings.[37]

Whilst the picture of Red Army workers taking their difficulties with a smile is whimsical, the sense of disorientation at finding themselves in an alien environment that this description implies would have been only natural.

The strongest reason for accepting the idea that it was established workers who were behind the *volynka* is the form and course of protest. Traditions of protest reaching back through the spring of 1918 to 1917 and beyond were an important factor in the organization of the *volynka*. The traditions of the Trubochnoi workers have already been noted. The role of traditional links between enterprises in facilitating protest, such as that between the Baltiiskii and Gvozdilnyi works, also suggests that this was not a spontaneous outburst by mobilized peasants. Women do not appear to have played an initiating role except perhaps in the case of the Laferm workers. Finally, the demands made by workers regarding food supplies do not suggest that they reflected peasant interests since whilst they attacked the irrational elements in Communist Party food supply policy, they also realized the weakness of their own position in the market *vis-à-vis* the peasants. To this extent their demands had not changed since 1917.

There was also a degree of organization to the *volynka* which belies the impression of a spontaneous outburst. Usanov mentions that the strikers organized 'pickets' and 'guard posts'. A proclamation posted round Petrograd on 27 February confirms the proposition that there were conscious attempts at organization.

> A complete change is necessary in the policies of the Government. First of all the workers and peasants need freedom. They don't want to live by the decrees of the Bolsheviks; they want to control their own destinies.

> Comrades, preserve revolutionary order! Determinedly and in an organized manner demand: Liberation of all arrested socialists and non-partisan working men. Abolition of martial law; freedom of speech, press and assembly for all those who labour, union and soviet representatives. Call meetings, pass resolutions, send your delegates to the authorities and work for the realization of your demands.[38]

This proclamation would appear to be the work of an experienced political organization and opposition socialist parties did play a part in events. The most surprising omission from the accounts of the Petrograd *volynka* is any mention of the LSRs, who had traditionally enjoyed a following in the city. The official Menshevik Party organization, on the other hand, had been strengthened by the arrival of Dan, a veteran member of the Central Committee, at the end of 1920. Despite repression, it was still able to hold meetings in early 1921 as the Cheka had used out-of-date membership lists when making arrests. The plekhanovite mensheviks had numbers of activists in Petrograd and their influence can be detected in a number of calls for the Constituent Assembly. The 'menshevik leaflets' calling for strikes and the formation of delegations, which Semanov mentions were circulating in early February, are most likely their work.[39]

The official mensheviks were active in the enterprises. Two leading members of the official organization, Kazukov and Kamenskii, spoke at workers' meetings before they were arrested: at the Lesner works on 16 February and in the following days at the Nobel works and a number of enterprises in the Vasileostrovskii district. Semanov credits Kamenskii with proposing a motion to the workers of the Novyi Lesner works on 14 February. (The workers' vote is not recorded.) Semanov's summary gives the impression of having taken liberties with the original but, no doubt, gives an idea of the issues covered. It called for:

1. Elections to all soviets by secret ballot;
2. a coalition of all socialist parties;
3. the restoration of free trade;
4. restoration of private property – even large scale;
5. free labour;
6. freedom of movement; and
7. the removal of the trade pickets.

The same resolution was put before workers at other enterprises, including the Nobel works.[40]

The official mensheviks displayed their usual ambivalence about workers' protest and, according to Dan, took a 'sceptical' attitude to the strike movement. At the height of the *volynka*, with the help of friendly printers, the mensheviks were able to put out 1000 copies of their proclamation, 'To the starving and freezing Petersburg workers'. This document was moderate in tone. Dan remarks that the Menshevik Party organization was concerned to prevent the movement being used by the 'counter-revolution', 'In any case, in our organization it was set out that the movement should in no way be blown up, to recommend the workers to be satisfied with partial concessions.'[41] The plekhanovite mensheviks were not constrained by such scruples. Dan, who is not an entirely unbiased witness, described a chance meeting with a member of Unity, a plekhanovite group, in a private flat. 'He spoke rapturously about his meeting with a workers' circle which stood on the platform of the Constituent Assembly. He assured me that the movement would not stop until the Bolsheviks were overthrown and asked for orators to be sent to workers' meetings; 'Only don't send Jews!' the circle asked.'[42]

Judging by a number of accounts, slogans in support of the Constituent Assembly found a resonance amongst workers. A proclamation put out by the 'Socialist workers from the Nevskii District', where the Putilov works was situated, exemplified this:

> We know who is afraid of the Constituent Assembly. It is they who will no longer be able to rob the people. Instead they will have to answer before the representatives of the people for their deceit, robberies and all their crimes. Down with the hated communists! Down with the Soviet Government! Long live the Constituent Assembly!

This leaflet was almost certainly the work of a local plekhanovite menshevik group. Soon after, in their *émigré* journal, an article described how the Narvsko-Petergofskii district Group of SDs had been implicated in attempts to print a leaflet.[43] The plekhanovite mensheviks also tried to revive the anti-bolshevik Conference Movement of early 1918 by summoning a Council of Representatives.

On 2 March a leaflet put out by a Group of SDs called on Petrograd workers to support the Kronstadt sailors with arms. It called for a unified bloc of socialist parties and the formation of a Conference of Petrograd Factory Representatives. A number of leaflets signed by a Council of Representatives were in circulation. The plekhanovite mensheviks claimed that the demands for the Constituent Assembly and a

re-formed Conference Movement came from below. 'At the time of the strike the workers independently, without suggestion from outside, put forward the demand for the Constituent Assembly. This demand was repeated by the Conference of Factory Representatives.'[44] The re-formed Conference of Factory Representatives, if it existed, was a small and isolated body. It also appears that activists were caught off guard by the strike and only began serious agitation after the main economic grievances of the workers had been conceded at the beginning of March.

More worrying for the communists was the impact that workers' protest had on Party members. The absence of a significant Workers' Opposition in Petrograd was a mixed blessing for the party leadership. Whilst the Workers' Opposition could certainly help to stir up and focus discontent, it also helped to mitigate direct conflict between workers and the Communist Party, as the example of Moscow shows. The violence of the confrontation between the Party and workers in Petrograd had a debilitating impact on communists. Dan's description of the gloomy faces of the officer cadets sent on to the Vasilevskii island has already been cited, and during the *volynka* communists were called on to undertake many unpleasant tasks. Usanov recalled the special role played by the Vasileostrovskii district komsomol organization in spying on strikers' meetings. Such work caused some komsomol members to leave the organization.[45] Dan also describes the impact of such work on komsomol members.

> The dirty job of shadowing was laid on the Komsomol. The young people had to shadow workers' meetings in flats and call the Cheka for arrests. Far from all members of the Komsomol agreed to carry out this shameful role. Even the bolshevik press was forced to admit that the Komsomol turned out to be 'not up to the task' and that many young communists took the most active part in the anti-bolshevik demonstrations. I personally had later to meet a fifteen-year-old boy communist in the House of Preventative Detention who had been arrested for warning workers of a coming raid by the Cheka instead of shadowing them.[46]

The organization and determination of the Petrograd workers during the *volynka* cannot entirely be explained by the work of opposition socialist party activists. Soviet authors, who in general stress the role played by the agitation of opposition activists during the *volynka*, have sometimes claimed that Kronstadt sailors encouraged the workers.

A. S. Pukhov suggests that a delegation of Kronstadt sailors visited the Trubochnoi works on 26 February and, after that, the Laferm and Baltiiskii works also. Whilst the Kronstadt sailors did send delegations to find out what was happening in Petrograd during the *volynka*, it is highly unlikely that they attempted to have the workers adopt the slogan of the Constituent Assembly, as Pukhov suggests, since they were to reject it decisively shortly afterwards in favour of more democratic soviets. In fact, the workers were quite capable of calling meetings and formulating demands without outside help. Miasnikov described how, during the build-up to the *volynka*, workers would not let communists, even workers, address their meetings.

> On the eve of the almost general strike in Petrograd we did not know that it would break out ... in spite of the fact that we had communists in almost every shop. What did this mean? The working class had built an unbreachable wall between itself and the Communist Party and the communists are not aware of this just as [tsarist] police agents were never aware.[47]

Moscow

At the same time that the Petrograd *volynka* was gaining momentum, industrial unrest was building up in Moscow. In the first half of February 1921 meetings of workers' representatives in the capital approved resolutions that repeated, with some differences of emphasis, the demands made by Petrograd workers during the *volynka*. The similarity of the demands raised by workers in the two capitals in early 1921 is remarkable, despite them being separated by great distances. Although the limited degree of conscious co-ordination was one factor, much more important was the impact of the general clamp-down on workers' unofficial efforts to obtain food supplies at the end of 1920 and, in the case of political demands, the common experience of 1917 with its slogans of 'Soviet Power!' and the 'Constituent Assembly!'.

During the third week of February industrial unrest in Moscow, as in Petrograd, turned into open confrontation and protest spilled on to the streets. The lack of sources again make any account impressionistic, but it appears that the *volynka* in Moscow was less serious than in Petrograd. It has certainly attracted less attention, although this may be purely fortuitous since the presence of Dan, Goldman and Berkman

in Petrograd and the rapid onset of the Kronstadt revolt after the *volynka* have all brought attention to bear on Petrograd.

There are factors which make it probable that Moscow was indeed not as severely affected by industrial unrest as Petrograd. First, the food supply situation in Moscow was very bad, but not as critical as in Petrograd, since it was nearer the sources of supply and enjoyed privileges connected with its status as the capital. Secondly, there was a more relaxed political atmosphere in the capital. In addition to the comparative tolerance of some of the leading Moscow communists towards opposition socialists, as the survival of the independent printers', bakers' and chemical workers' trades unions shows, the trade union and inner-party debates in Moscow were particularly lively. For a while, at the beginning of 1921, the local Communist Party committee was dominated by an opposition grouping, led by E. N. Ignatov, with Workers' Opposition support. This explains why workers were allowed to express their grievances at officially sanctioned meetings in Moscow and the readiness of the authorities to respond to some of their demands. Officially sanctioned protest, particularly the provincial metal workers' conference, preceded the strikes, and the limited concessions that were made were not enough to prevent direct confrontation but did take the edge off it.

The provincial conference of metal workers opened on 2 February and closed on 4 February. It was the first occasion Moscow workers had to respond to the rapidly deteriorating economic situation. As in Petrograd, rations had been cut at the end of January and the fuel crisis was affecting production and domestic heating. The delegates to the conference were clearly in a hostile mood and a non-communist observer, S. S. Maslov, reported that at the opening of the conference they demanded freedom of speech and personal immunity, which was granted by the Communist Party conference chairman, S. N. Smidovich. This led to a series of fiercely anti-communist speeches. The Moscow Communist Party newspaper, *Kommunisticheskii trud*, reported four resolutions that were approved by the conference. The first two, on food supply and on wages, were published on 5 and 6 February. The other two resolutions were highly controversial and were published over ten days after the end of the conference. These were first, 'The Role of Trade Unions and their Attitude to the Masses', published on 15 February and secondly, 'The Relations of Workers to Peasants', which was published the day after discussion of replacing grain

requisitioning with a tax in kind had been officially opened. These resolutions give a fairly good picture of the aspirations of metal workers since they were based on the lists of demands put forward at general meetings of workers at their enterprises. Around 1000 delegates attended the conference.[48]

The resolution on food supply followed an official report. The first demand of the resolution was for the abolition of privileged rations. Other demands included, as might be expected from workers in the metal-working industry, the abolition of payments to workers in kind out of their own production and the introduction of equal rations for all enterprises, with exceptions only for those where dangerous work was carried out. Reflecting the belief that there were abuses in the food supply apparatus and economic organizations, the resolution repeated the main demand of a similar conference of Moscow metal workers in the autumn of 1920 and called for the distribution of consumer goods to be placed in the hands of trade unions.[49] The most obvious omission from this resolution, compared with those approved by Petrograd workers, is any mention of the trade pickets, which reflects the more relaxed attitude in Moscow towards unofficial sources of supply, even after the closing of the Sukharevka market.

The most important point in the resolution on food supply was the decision to establish a ten-person commission, including Lozovskii and Tarasov (the Moscow metal workers' trade union leader), to ensure that the conference's decisions were implemented and that the NKProd and NKPS were doing everything to expedite the transport of foodstuffs to the capital. In line with this decision, and a supporting resolution of the Presidium of the Moscow Soviet, it was reported on 10 February that the first group of workers from enterprises had been sent to supervise and check the transport of food to Moscow.[50] These actions are indicative of the willingness of the Moscow Communist Party leadership to make concessions to workers' aspirations. The conference's demands also led to action at the national level. Kamenev reported to the plenum of the Moscow Soviet on 15 February that the resolution of the conference had been an important factor in persuading the SNK to abolish privileged rations. In a similar response to workers' concerns on 11 February, *Kommunisticheskii trud* reported that the SNK had also asked the Moscow Soviet to appoint one hundred of its members to the RKI to investigate illegalities in the distribution of rations and also to set up with the RKI, Moskommuna and the

Central and Moscow Commissions for the Supply of Workers a special commission to ensure an end to the illegal distribution of goods and food.[51]

The resolution on wages, which followed a report by Goltsman, expressed a desire for greater equality in the wages structure. In one of its paragraphs it called for the gradual introduction of equal wages for all workers, with the breaking of wage scales by various industrial branches and specialists being the main point of concern. The resolution demanded the bringing together of 'all groups of toilers without exception, not excluding specialists, into grades covered by wage scales, with the VTsSPS fixing separate, strictly defined wage scales for specialists; no rates not covered by the wage scale must exist after this'. Another important point was the call for the introduction of bonuses in kind to be paid according to the productivity of the individual worker. Bonuses were to be enjoyed equally by all factories with internal distribution to be handled by the workers' organizations of the factory.[52]

The resolution, 'The Role of Trade Unions in their Relations to the Masses', approved after a report by Lozovskii, called for a wide degree of democratization and an extension of trade union powers. The political implications of this resolution are sufficient to deserve a full translation.

> The provincial conference of the metal workers of Moscow and its province, having heard the report of comrade Lozovskii on the role of trade unions in their relations to the masses, and the masses to them, decrees:
>
> 1. In order to revive the work of trade unions, to carry out elections in a strictly democratic spirit, to which end to call on trade unions to introduce broad free agitation in factories and works.
>
> 2. To recognise the necessity of participation by workers' representatives, elected at general meetings of workers at the enterprises, in boards and factory managements; elections are to be confirmed by a general meeting of workers and the trade union; workers of the enterprise and the trade union have the right to recall the representative if he is not up to the job.
>
> 3. To establish communication with, supervision of and direct participation in the work of industrial branches and agencies. Trade unions appoint from their membership the necessary number of comrades.
>
> 4. No organization can appoint to factory committees and factory managements persons with a vote if they have not been elected by a

general meeting of the workers and have not been confirmed by the trade union.

5. All elected representatives in local and central bodies must periodically give reports to a general meeting of workers of the enterprise.

6. To ensure that workers are correctly informed about the work of trade union bodies, freedom of speech and assembly must be guaranteed.

7. To give workers in all factories a broad right to transfer from one enterprise to another with the permission of the trade union.

8. It is necessary to arrange periodic broad conferences for the future strengthening and development of trade unions.

9. To strengthen factories of the metal-working industry with the necessary cadre of skilled workers, the metal workers' trade union must, as soon as possible, take measures to bring back those metal workers not doing work consonant with their skill from villages and state institutions.'[53]

As can be seen, this resolution involved the broad extension of trade union power over the economic apparatus (para. 3) and over management (para. 2) in a manner reminiscent of the demand for workers' control in 1917. The demand for the right to move from one enterprise to another (para. 7) was an attack on the militarization of labour. The stipulation that only an enterprise's workers and the trade union have the right to a say in the appointment of members of factory committees and factory managements was an implicit attack on the prerogatives of the Communist Party cells and political departments. Most significantly, though, is the way the whole resolution is pervaded with a realization that an improvement in the workers' economic position and the trade unions depended on the implementation of democratic norms. In this respect, the calls for democratic elections to trade union bodies (para. 1), an end to co-options to factory committees and factory managements (para. 4) and freedom of speech and assembly (para. 6) are particularly striking.[54]

The resolution, 'The Relations of Workers to Peasants', was approved despite a speech by Lenin in which he defended grain requisitioning and the sowing campaign. It also warrants a full translation.[55]

The provincial conference of metal workers of Moscow and its province, having heard the report of comrade Kuraev on the relations of workers to peasants' decrees:

1. To recognise that the existing form of receiving the products of the work of the peasants by means of requisitioning, provoking the deterioration and collapse of agriculture, not only does not answer the

interests of the peasant masses but also, in a destructive way, is reflected in the position of the working masses.

2. To replace requisitioning with a fixed tax in kind, and this tax must relate to local conditions and be expressed in a size that is not burdensome for the peasantry and in that way gives it the possibility of raising and developing agriculture: the implementation of this tax must be carried out through the mediation of agricultural co-operatives.

3. To give the peasant the right of broad development and organization of agricultural co-operatives.

4. To organize a special type of trade union from the semi-proletarian elements of the village, organizationally linking these trade unions with the union of agricultural and forestry workers and the union of collective farms.

5. Surplus foodstuffs, after the fulfilment of the tax, shall remain for the direct use of the peasantry; the sale of surpluses can be carried out only to the organizations of toilers for their own consumption through the mediation of agricultural co-operatives.

6. To establish, in the near future, economic relations with western Europe to import from there agricultural equipment, machinery and artificial fertilizer with the participation in this matter of agricultural co-operatives.

7. To call upon comrade metal workers to raise and strengthen the production of agricultural machinery and equipment for the satisfaction by them of agriculture.

8. With the demobilization of the army to satisfy, as soon as possible, peasant farms with horses, especially in those places where a sharp shortage of horses is felt.

9. To call to the attention of the People's Commissariat for Agriculture the necessity of taking urgent measures to satisfy peasant farms with seeds.

10. To establish a more correct supply of the peasantry with needed consumer goods carrying out the distribution of those goods through the mediation of agricultural co-operatives.[56]

These resolutions clearly demonstrate the dissatisfaction of Moscow metal workers with War Communism economic policies and the political dictatorship of the Communist Party. The trade monopoly was not enforced strictly in Moscow so trade pickets were not such a bone of contention as they were in Petrograd, but like Petrograd workers, Moscow workers were wary of demanding the return of completely unfettered trade in grain. Whilst they understood the self-defeating nature of the policy of grain requisitioning, they stressed the need for exchange between the workers and peasants to be carried out through

co-operatives. There is not a clear indication in these resolutions of what workers' aspirations were with regard to the national political regime, but the calls for democratic principles and civil rights to be observed in the workplace suggest support, at least, for a democratization of the soviets. In all main respects workers were demanding that the principles of 1917 be upheld.

These resolutions were based on lists of demands drawn up in the factories, but their coherence suggests co-ordination in their authorship. Much of the approved resolution on relations with the peasantry is reminiscent of menshevik and, especially in the emphasis on co-operatives, of SR ideas, but it was reported that Menshevik Party and SR attempts to have their resolutions carried by non-Party delegates were unsuccessful. In any case, it is highly unlikely that a Menshevik Party or SR resolution would have been given such publicity. The conference gave communist speakers a rough ride and these resolutions should be seen as a concession to the mood of shop-floor workers. The publication of the resolution on the attitude of trade unions to the masses and relations with the peasantry coincided with that of a resolution of the Rogozhsko-Simonovskii district soviet calling on workers not to heed strike calls, suggesting that the Communist Party leadership believed that they would find a resonance with workers in the enterprises.[57]

The appearance of these resolutions in *Kommunisticheskii trud* should also be interpreted in the context of the struggle that was going on in the Moscow Communist Party organization between an opposition group led by E. N. Ignatov and the local leadership. Tarasov, the metal workers' trade union leader in Moscow, who was appointed by the conference to the food supply commission, was an active supporter of the Workers' Opposition. Furthermore, the influence of Workers' Opposition ideas is certainly detectable in these resolutions. The resolution on food supply, with its emphasis on co-operatives, and the demands for greater trade union participation in management and economic administration reflect fundamental Workers' Opposition aspirations. However, the demands for greater democracy in these resolutions go beyond anything proposed in the Workers' Opposition theses to the Xth Party Congress and their publication may have represented an attempt by the party leadership to outflank the Ignatovites.

As already noted, the decisions of the conference led to action being taken and, on the basis of the report of the ten-man commission,

the Moscow Soviet Presidium approved a resolution based on the resolutions of the conference at the end of February. This resolution was concerned mainly with combating abuses in the food supply apparatus. It also made limited concessions to the calls for greater democratization of the trade unions. It noted that 'the revival of trade unions is absolutely necessary on the broad initiative of its members, the elective principle being applied in all trade union organs'. In a tacit admission of the unpopularity of communists in the factories, it repeated part of the resolution of the IXth Party Congress which had stressed that, 'communists do not enjoy any privileges in the composition of factory committees'.[58] The resolution on relations between workers and peasants was ignored.

Other groups of workers echoed the metal workers' demands at officially sanctioned meetings. However, in contrast to 1920, the effect of Communist Party policies in clamping down on unofficial sources of supply and phasing out 'shock' supply was to reduce conflict between different groups of workers. Even after the disbanding of the board of their union in the summer of 1920, anarchist influence remained strong amongst bakers. An article in *Pravda* in August 1920 lamented the fact that the activities of bakery factory committees were limited to the distribution of rations and that anarchist influence remained strong. Bakery No. 43, in the Rogozhsko-Simonovskii district, was still reported as being tense in September 1920. The factory committee had a non-Party majority and its chairman was a Bolshevik who had been expelled from the Party for refusing to go to the front. The shop-floor workers were discontented with their rations. By the end of October the anarchist leader of the bakers, Pavlov, was active in the Moscow Soviet again.[59] It is clear that after the bakers' strike was over the communists were still not able to enforce their will in individual bakeries. The vital task that bakers carried out made their position a great deal stronger than the printers, who seem to have been quiet during this period.

A city-wide meeting of Moscow bakers that took place on 21 February echoed the demands of the metal workers although their anarchist traditions made themselves felt. The prominent anarchists and Maximalists, Pavlov, Kamyshev and Niushenkov, managed to have their resolution approved. The published reports of this meeting are far from informative and details of the speeches and resolutions made are not available, except in fragments. The meeting saw attacks on

sowing committees, calls for peasant representation on the VSNKh and VTsSPS, so they could have a better understanding of the problems faced by workers, and calls for greater workers' rights. 'Is it not possible to reduce the powers of the managers. After all they have twisted us into a sheep's horn. ... The rule of the specialists' must be investigated. They are alienated from us. ... The trade unions must be shaken up from below not above. ... An end to privileges and inequalities. We are all equal. We are being unjustly treated.'[60] These fragmentary quotations from the resolution indicate an emphasis on discontent over Communist Party authoritarianism, the 'shaking-up' of trade unions and the granting of powers to specialists.

Further evidence of the unpopularity of the Communist Party was provided by the events surrounding the meeting of the Congress of Soviets of the Moscow rural district on 15 February. On the opening day of the congress, whilst the Communist Party fraction was meeting, a group of non-Party delegates gathered together. A Communist Party official turned up at the meeting but was viewed very suspiciously and asked to leave. He refused, provoking a walk-out from the congress by a group of non-Party delegates. Subsequent reports claimed that the walk-out was a tactic planned beforehand as a protest at the presence at the congress of ten communist soldiers. It was also complained that the Communist Party official had been sent to the meeting of non-Party delegates to control them. Furthermore, it was claimed that a 'non-Party party', which had 'declared a complete monopoly over all peasants and workers not in the Communist Party', existed in the Moscow rural district.[61]

During the third week of February relations between the Communist Party and Moscow workers took a sharp turn for the worse. The general background to the *volynka* in the capital, the cut in rations, the clamp-down on unofficial sources of food supply and the closure of enterprises that had only just been re-started, has already been described, but the reasons why protest should have erupted when it did are difficult to work out. The possibility of there being some communication between activists in Petrograd and Moscow should not be ruled out. Confrontation broke out almost simultaneously on 23 and 24 of February in both cities and rumours about unrest in Petrograd were circulating in Moscow.[62] Although the sources are fragmentary, they are good enough to allow us to reconstruct a wave of strikes that had its centre in the heart of industrial Moscow, the

Khamovnicheskii and Zamoskvorecheskii districts, and which affected a number of large enterprises. As in Petrograd, protest was given a strong impetus by rumours of the killing of workers.

The initiative for the strikes in Moscow appears to have been given by the mint which, although the country was officially moving towards a moneyless economy, was working day and night to supply the bank notes that fuelled inflation. The mint, formerly the Vtorov works, was now known as Goznak. There were over 7000 workers there in January 1921, with over half female or adolescent. Labour protection in the enterprise was admitted to be 'very bad', which led to a high sickness rate. At the beginning of January the enterprise had received a batch of turpentine to clean the machines, but it was of such poor quality that several female workers lost consciousness because of the fumes. On 28 January the chairman of the local RKI cell and two managers were either expelled from the Communist Party or reduced to candidate status for their dealings with a speculator which 'had discredited the Party, especially in the eyes of the broad working masses of the Goznak works'. These measures had little impact on the mood of the Goznak workers. *Kommunisticheskii trud* reported on 22 February that, 'At a meeting of the bureau of the Communist Party cell of the 1st Factory for the Manufacture of state tokens [Goznak] the complete absence of any political work in the collective was remarked on in debate.'[63]

On 23 or 24 February, the Goznak workers held meetings hostile to the Communist Party and eventually a demonstration was organized. Maslov reported that at this point troops were brought in but they refused to open fire on the workers so the 'district communist detachment' was called in, fired on the demonstrators and killed and wounded several workers. *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* reported that after this several large enterprises in the Khamovnicheskii district went on strike and persuaded workers at those factories that had stayed working to join them. A crowd of 1500 went to the local Red Army barracks and demanded to be allowed to speak to the soldiers, but a number of workers were shot, exacerbating their mood.[64]

In the evening of 24 February the Moscow Communist Party organization met to discuss the situation. The meeting was addressed by Lenin who is reported in his collected works as having described how 'kulak risings' inspired by SRs had caused food supply problems. He ascribed the fuel crisis to a failure in the economic plan which had led to too many enterprises being re-started. Lenin suggested that

such economic maladministration could be tackled by promoting proletarians into administrative posts. Finally, he spoke of how foreign newspapers were writing about plans by the SRs to use the country's difficulties for their own ends and he attacked the opposition within the Moscow Communist Party organization. In particular, he attacked those who were complaining about elections to the Moscow Communist Party committee at the provincial conference, for diverting the Party from its tasks. He concluded, 'We have carried out our duty without discussions and we must know what it is by now. Communists must be sent to all non-Party organizations to explain this bad situation.'[65] B. G. Skundin, a Moscow communist, paints a rather more dramatic picture of this meeting in his memoirs.

> At that time I was the ex-officio instructor of the City district committee of the party. Dropping in to see the district secretary at five o'clock in the evening I was told that a pass for an extraordinary meeting of the organization had been sent for me. No more than sixty people were present at the meeting. The ambience was very informal. At a small table sat the chairman of the Moscow Soviet, L. B. Kamenev, and on a table a telephone rang constantly. Obviously, urgent communications were being delivered. Looking round at those present, I unexpectedly recognized Vladimir Ilich Lenin who was sitting with M. I. Kalinin still wearing a coat and hat. 'Obviously something important has happened if Vladimir Ilich is amongst us', I thought. This disturbed and calmed me at the same time.
>
> Kamenev declared that he would inform us about events in a number of enterprises. He reported to the meeting that mensheviks and SRs were stirring up discontent amongst the workers on the grounds of the bad supply of bread and fuel and were carrying on anti-Soviet agitation in the enterprises. They had succeeded in provoking the Goznak workers to demonstrate. Today provocateurs at Goznak had killed a worker and had immediately begun to shout, 'The Chekists are killing workers!'. The excited crowd of workers set off for the Goznak club. The mensheviks and SRs heightened passions with demagogic speeches. The attempts by communists and conscious workers to explain to the workers the real reasons for their difficulties provoked protests and they were prevented from speaking.

Skundin claims that there was a note of 'panic' in Kamenev's report. Shliapnikov then told the meeting that he had tried to speak to the Goznak workers but had been prevented from doing so and asked Lenin what course of action they should take. Lenin proposed sending

'fifty communists' headed by Kalinin to win round the workers. Skundin gives this version of what happened at Goznak. Kalinin's arrival was met by shouts of 'Give us bread!' to which he replied, 'You give me bread!' This was supposed to have taken the workers aback and quietened them down. Kalinin further attempted to reduce the political temperature by simply sitting with the workers and chatting and smoking with them. After a 'demagogic' speech by a 'menshevik', Kalinin was allowed to speak and he attacked the mensheviks and SRs for taking advantage of the food supply crisis for their own political ends. Skundin credits this with changing the mood of the workers and defusing the situation.[66]

The confirmation of a killing, although attributed to provocateurs amongst the workers, and a demonstration by the Goznak workers are important details in this source. However, the impression given that Kalinin's speech ended the disturbances is not borne out by other evidence. Indeed, the reference to the mysterious 'fifty communists' gives rise to the suspicion that Kalinin might have had more substantial support.

Elsewhere on the evening of 24 February, outraged by the killing of their comrades, workers held mass meetings. The two mentioned in the sources are one at the Institute of Higher Women's Courses, at which *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* reported, probably with some exaggeration, an 'enormous meeting' was held with up to 10,000 workers present. Non-Party speakers made 'harsh speeches' against the Bolsheviks. A mass meeting of workers from the Riazan–Uralsk railway, whose repair workshops were situated in the Zamoskvorecheskii district, was held at around the same time. Reports of the hostile attitude of workers at this workshop were published a number of times in 1920. At a meeting at these workshops in May 1920 it was reported that a menshevik activist, Gusarov, had attacked the communists, claiming that only those who did not want to work joined the Party. The poor attitude of checkweighmen and clerks who were apathetic about the situation of the Red Army in the Polish War was commented on at the end of October. Around this time the Communist Party cell on the Moscow section of the Riazan–Uralsk railway was told that the fuel supply situation was worse than in the previous year.[67]

The most detailed source for the mass meeting of the Riazan–Uralsk railway workers comes from a memoir published long after the events took place. There is also an inexplicable but slight discrepancy

of dates but the details of the resolution passed are corroborated by contemporary Soviet sources. Thus, the relevant issue of *Gudok* is not available, but *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, quoting from the issue for 23 February, reports on an enormous meeting, mostly of workers from the Riazan–Uralsk railway at the Karl Marx University. Official speakers were interrupted by non-Party workers who attacked their calls for the workers to work harder, on the basis of united effort and their 'organizational spirit', and demanded that the Bolsheviks make compromises. A Menshevik Party resolution calling for a coalition ministry, an end to the grain requisitioning and 'full popular power' was passed. The menshevik source stresses the broad support this resolution had amongst non-Party workers and their active role in attacking Communist Party policies.[68]

M. L. Svirskaia, an SR, was present at the meeting of the Riazan–Uralsk railway workers and described the scene in her memoirs. She linked it with the funeral of Prince Kropotkin, the famous Russian anarchist. Opposition socialists had been allowed to take part in the funeral and many workers left their factories to join the procession. Svirskaia's account contains a discrepancy in dates. She says the funeral and mass meeting took place on 22–23 February when it can be firmly established that Kropotkin's funeral took place on 13 February. Such a confusion in dates casts doubts on the reliability of her account but the link between the funeral and meeting is interesting. Svirskaia recounts how she went with two party colleagues, Sh. Fedodeev and Ts. Burshtein, to the Plekhanov Institute, by the Pavletskii station, where A. V. Lunacharskii, a leading communist, was due to speak. Before letting him speak, the railway workers, who over-filled the hall, demanded that he guarantee freedom of speech and immunity from arrest for those present. Lunacharskii gave his word of honour and Fedodeev spoke and explained the SR programme, including the need to re-call the Constituent Assembly. A resolution based on this speech was approved by the workers. On leaving the hall Fedodeev and Burshtein were arrested but Svirskaia escaped temporarily.[69]

From Moscow emissaries were sent out along the railway to spread the strike. A report in *Gudok* described how one activist 'travelled to Biriulevo station and there continued his despicable, provocative work, sowing confusion and discontent amongst the railway workers'. Another activist was accused of cutting telephone lines. Later, the resolution passed by the Riazan–Uralsk workshop workers was put to

workers in Saratov further down the line as 'the resolution of the Moscow workers'.[70]

Over the next few days strikes spread to other districts of Moscow. Details of these strikes are very sparse and have to be pieced together from fragments of evidence. One Soviet historian, A. A. Matiugin, after describing menshevik influence amongst printers and chemical workers, anarchist influence amongst bakers and SR influence amongst metal workers, writes that a number of factory committees in these industries were won over by their agitation. In all these cases the traditional affiliations of the different groups of Moscow workers can be detected. Besides noting that there was a strike at the Goznak works, elsewhere in the Zamoskvorecheskii district he mentions that SRs organized a street demonstration at the important Bromlei metal-working enterprise.

Sotsialisticheskii vestnik gave the following description of the situation at the Bromlei works. On 25 February a general meeting of the workforce demanded that new elections to the soviets be held. The management dispersed the meeting but the workers took to the streets in order to persuade workers at other enterprises to join the strike. In the evening mass arrests of opposition socialists, including many SRs, were carried out. Strikes spread eastwards into the Rogozhsko-Simonovskii district to the AMO automobile works and the Mars metal-working enterprise. Matiugin mentions that the Bogatyr chemical works on the north-eastern outskirts of the city and the Kauchuk rubber works in the Khamovnicheskii district suffered strikes. Other enterprises, which he does not name, were also affected. *Pravda* reported agitation by an ex-communist at the Armaments works for free trade and a free press. Riazanov was credited with rebutting the agitation of 'a former SR' at the Prokhorovskaia textile mill.[71]

Strikes were also spreading outside Moscow city itself into the surrounding provinces. At the end of February and continuing into March a strike involving 4000 workers in Iaroslavl province, probably at the large textile Iaroslavl textile mill, was reported. As in Petrograd and Moscow, the strike had been preceded by considerable industrial expansion. In January seventeen enterprises were reported working in the province, in February twenty and, in March eighteen. By May only eleven were working.[72] In Podolsk, where more serious strikes were to occur in the summer, the closure of the only recently re-started factories in early March was reported as leading to anti-

communist agitation.[73] There was also unrest at the Mytyshchinskii railway wagon-building works. In August 1920 *Pravda* noted that the Mytyshchinskii factory committee was under non-Party control and that the only communist in the factory was absent. In mid-March 1921 *Pravda* reported that anti-Soviet agitation in the Mytyshchinskii works was being conducted by foremen. This report was rebutted in May and it was claimed that only representations by workers against reductions in rations had taken place. However, a report in the metal workers' trade union journal referred to the enterprise as having been caught up in the 'wave of Kronstadt events'. *Pravda* reported that problems were still being experienced at the enterprise in July.[74] Further away it was reported in Nizhnii-Novgorod that water transport workers were stopping work because of the food supply crisis.[75]

Communist tactics in Moscow were the predictable mixture of concessions and coercion. A leading article in *Izvestiia* on 24 February called for attention to be given to improving the material position of workers and strengthening the work of the 'investigative punitive organs'. Moscow and Moscow province were put under martial law and SR and menshevik leaders were arrested.[76] *Kommunisticheskii trud*, on the other hand, emphasized the measures taken by the Moscow Soviet to combat abuses in the food supply apparatus and published rules for the way in which workers should carry out investigations. Lists of communists who had been delegated to go to the factories were drawn up. Workers were warned not to listen to rumours. The decisions of a commission set up after the provincial metal workers conference, held nearly a month previously to examine the question of food supply and the role of trade unions, were published. These decisions included assurances of the abolition of privileged rations and greater democracy in the trade unions.[77]

Peculiar rumours swept the city. A leading article in the main trade union paper, *Trud*, explained the need for cuts in rations and warned workers against giving in to calls for strikes. Then it mentioned a recent rumour about 'mysterious white jumpers' (*belye pryguny*) which were supposed to have appeared on Moscow streets at night. It continued, 'This is, of course, nonsense but the appearance of white jumpers of the menshevik type is beyond doubt. They jump from factory to factory from works to works in the costume of those who complain about the bad lot of the workers and pour out floods of tears.' An article in *Izvestiia*, which also linked the rumour about

'white jumpers' with political agitation, went on to say that the rumour was that thieves had appeared dressed in white shrouds and also 'jumpers' who 'walked on springs wearing masks'.[78]

One of the main decisions of the meeting of the Communist Party organization on 24 February was to report to the Moscow Soviet on the external and internal situation of the country. The Soviet met on 28 February. Before Lenin's speech, N. P. Briukhanov reported on food supply, defended the food supply bodies and claimed that the food supply crisis was the result of transport problems. An appeal was made to release imprisoned mensheviks. In his speech Lenin admitted that plans had been laid on the basis of over-optimistic calculations for food and fuel supply: 'we exaggerated our strength and did not make correct calculations'. He blamed kulak risings and menshevik and SR agitation for making the supply crisis worse and using it for their political advantage. He also accused the *émigré* White and menshevik press of stirring up opposition amongst workers to the policy of granting concessions to foreign capitalists. Finally, he blamed strikes in Petrograd on foreign spies and menshevik agitation. As for Moscow, he noted attempts 'to blow up rumours of a demonstration. In fact one communist was killed by the bullet of a provocateur.'[79]

After Lenin's speech, the Moscow Soviet approved an appeal, which was published the next day, calling on Moscow workers not to strike. Apart from indicating the seriousness of the situation, the appeal also gives an indication of Communist Party tactics, hints at the psychology of the workers and the direction that the strike action took. The appeal began by claiming that the landowners and capitalists, 'with the help of SRs and mensheviks', were attempting to starve out the Moscow workers by instigating 'kulak risings' and sabotaging the transport of foodstuffs to Moscow. It also claimed that Entente agents were involved, that, 'They call on the workers to demonstrate in the hope that, by means of a provocation, a conflict will result, to spill blood, in order to heap responsibility for bloodshed on Soviet power.' The appeal claimed that the food supply situation was in fact good and the crisis temporary, and reported measures to cut out abuses and privileges in the distribution of rations. It called on workers 'not to allow amongst you any agitation for a strike and demonstration ... ' and ' ... not to give in to provocation; to arrest and hand over to the organs of public security anyone who calls you on to the street, calls you out on a demonstration in front of the barracks'. Finally, there was a short

appeal to soldiers 'not to give in to the provocation which wants, in the guise of inviting you, with the toiling people, to disrupt the business of strengthening industry, without which the position of the peasantry will deteriorate'.[80]

The mixture of concessions and coercion eventually broke the will of the strikers. On 3 March strike leaders at the Riazan–Uralsk railway workshops were arrested for 'membership of parties actively involved in the Kronstadt events'. A mass meeting was immediately called to demand their release. The following day a resolution was put to the workers by the local menshevik activist Gusarov. It would have confirmed the resolution calling for 'full popular power' passed at the mass meeting at the Karl Marx Institute on 24 February and also included the threat not to return to work until their demands were satisfied. After a long debate the resolution failed to gain approval. Instead, a resolution put forward by V. P. Nogin, the communist trade unionist, that could only have been regarded as a semi-victory for his party was passed.

> We the workers, craftsmen and employees of the Riazan–Uralsk railway working at the depot and workshops of the Moscow station declare that we consider it necessary to take all measures to improve the work on our line in order to increase the delivery of food and fuel. Taking into account the declaration of comrade Ilin about the release of comrade Iliasov, we insist also on the release of the arrested worker, comrade Mikhailov, after investigation of his guilt. We all promise to take measures to ensure that work on the line continues in future. In the struggle with enemies of the workers and peasants we will support Soviet power carrying out in its turn the will of workers and peasants.[81]

Even though the resolution included important caveats, the end of the strike of the Riazan–Uralsk railway workshop workers was an important victory for the communists. On 6 March *Kommunisticheskii trud* was able to say that although the Riazan–Uralsk railway workers had given in to menshevik–SR agitation, they 'now are somehow beginning to come to their senses. The disturbances are over. The Riazan–Uralsk railway workers are beginning to talk seriously without demagogy.'[82]

Just as in Petrograd, industrial unrest in Moscow led to measures being taken by the Communist Party leadership that prefigured the NEP. At the Xth Party Congress Tomskii recalled that when 'the nervous mood not only amongst the mass of workers but also in the party ranks began, then declarations from our representatives in the

NKProd began to arrive [at the VTsSPS] saying that not everything there was in order and proposing new elections to the collegium'. At this point it appears that Shliapnikov demanded that A. D. Tsiurupa, the People's Commissar for Food Supply, be arrested for allowing potatoes to rot. The whole matter was discussed by the bureau of the Communist Party faction of the VTsSPS on 3 March. The meeting passed a resolution which called for the lifting of the trade pickets, a revision of the procurement plan, a reduction in the number of goods subject to government monopoly, the free procurement of animal foodstuffs, greater opportunities for the exchange of goods with peasants who had fulfilled their procurements, the quick distribution of perishable products and the establishment of an investigative commission by the Communist Party Central Committee to investigate why so many foodstuffs had been allowed to spoil. An NKProd representative and a representative of the trade unions on the NKProd were to make reports to the VTsSPS on the following day. Lenin persuaded the Politburo to postpone discussion of these issues until the Xth Party Congress because 'we cannot allow the sowing of unnecessary panic'.[83]

In Moscow the official Menshevik Party organization appears to have played little part in the strikes, although it is more than likely that individual mensheviks were involved in the Goznak unrest, since it was closely linked with the Mamontov print works, which was a Menshevik Party stronghold. *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* claimed that non-Party workers were prominent in the Riazan–Uralsk railway workshop workers' protest.[84] On 25 February 160 mensheviks were arrested in Moscow.[85] Plekhanovite mensheviks were active and enjoyed a similar degree of success as their Petrograd comrades. The menshevik Gusarov is credited with proposing the resolution of the Riazan–Uralsk railway workshop workers. Its call for the Constituent Assembly clearly betrays his plekhanovite orientation. SRs also played a role in organizing the Bromlei workers' demonstration and the Riazan–Uralsk railway workshop workers' strikes. The Guzhon metal-working enterprise elected an SR factory committee at this time.[86]

Perhaps even more than in Petrograd, opposition socialist parties in Moscow seem to have been unable or unwilling to risk confrontation with the communists by becoming involved in protest by workers. In the absence of the leadership they could offer, workers had to rely on their own resources. In some cases this was based on long traditions of

consistent opposition to the Bolsheviks, as in the case of the bakers, chemical and railway workers. Metal workers, as a group, represented a new force but individual enterprises had developed their own traditions. In part, their prominence in early 1921, like that of the Goznak workers, can be attributed to an expansion in the workforce, bringing with it activists from closed enterprises and creating tensions over rations and labour disciplinary measures. Other groups, such as the printers and textile workers, appear to have played little part in unrest, except to the extent that printers were involved in the mint, and there was agitation at the Prokorovskaia textile mill, which had traditions of opposition to the communists, and where expansion had recently occurred. This quiescence can be explained in the former case by the repression following the 1920 strikes and in the latter by the textile industry's catastrophic economic state.

The *volynka* in Saratov, the Donbass and the Urals

The other main centre of widespread protest by workers in early 1921, for which published information exists, is Saratov. Saratov was not a major industrial city but, like most provincial towns, had a railway depot and workshops, and in this case, boat repair yards and small factories and workshops for the manufacture and repair of agricultural machinery. In the spring of 1921 the first signs of the disastrous famine that was to hit the region later in the year were visible and this helps to explain the character of the unrest here. Mortality in the city hit an all-time peak in June.[87] All the same, the immediate demands of Saratov workers do not appear to have differed very greatly from those advanced in Moscow and Petrograd. The grievances of Saratov workers centred almost entirely on complaints of abuses in the food supply apparatus, and the mixture of extravagant Communist Party promises of better supplies and the reality of extreme shortage created mass confrontation with workers. The emphasis on abuses in the state food supply apparatus rather than trade pickets was understandable in a famine area where free market prices were bound to be high.

As in Petrograd and Moscow, it was long-standing workers who took the initiative in organizing unrest in Saratov. Activists from the opposition socialist parties played a role in the protest but it was the existence of 'traditional meeting places' and the generally understood

meaning of the workshop siren which made the strikes possible. The links between the Saratov workers and their Moscow comrades clearly shows that they felt themselves to be part of a wider community of railway workers with shared experiences of political action. The polarization created by three and a half years of Communist Party dictatorship had left a workforce that was either cowed or unwilling to accept anything less than the complete rejection of the Soviet Republic and the convocation of the Constituent Assembly.

As elsewhere, at the end of February 1921 Saratov was affected by the deteriorating food supply situation. In response, an Economic Conference, including representatives of factory committees, production cells, economic departments, factory managements and other organizations, was set up. At the conference a report was given on the work of the Commission on Workers' Supply, which had been set up in Saratov in November 1920 to systematize the distribution of rations, to confirm the granting of 'shock' status to enterprises and exercise general supervision of the supply of rations to workers. The conference pronounced the commission's work 'unsatisfactory' and its resolution accused it of failing to exercise supervision over supply and called on the provincial trade union council to delegate representatives to supervise the work of the provincial food supply committee. It called for measures to be taken to cut red-tape, to make the approval of the provincial trade union council mandatory before the distribution of any rations and for a review of the list of 'shock' enterprises to be carried out. The commission, in future, would have to give regular monthly reports to workers' organizations.[88]

On 4 March it was reported in the local Communist Party newspaper that rations would have to be cut. The following day the resolution of the town soviet, with trade union representatives present, when the ration cut had been agreed, was reported in some detail.

> In order to ensure the correct distribution of available foodstuffs and the struggle with abuses, the united meeting calls on the soviet executive committee to take urgent measures to abolish illegal distribution, to end the speculators' market and to bring all those who break this decree to justice. ... Considering that the reduction in rations will be reflected in the mood of the workers, the united meeting calls on all toilers to be firm and show endurance, noting that the approved exceptional measures are directed exclusively in the interests of the Revolution and the victory of the working class.

It was reported that the cut in rations had been opposed by the 'well-known self-seekers' Volodin and Shishkin. However, the point of this report was to stress that even these 'conciliators' had joined the rest of the meeting in calling on workers not to strike.[89]

In fact workers had already taken matters into their own hands. A report of the Saratov disturbances published in *Pravda* a year later filled in some of the details. 'Rumours about the Kronstadt Revolt reached Saratov and gave rise in the city to conversations about the risings of Petrograd and Moscow workers demanding a Constituent Assembly, popular power and other "political blessings".' Mensheviks and SRs had organized workers' demonstrations. 'On 3 March, after lunch, workers in the railway workshops downed tools and went out on to the embankment, a traditional place for all gatherings and meetings.' The workers were addressed by representatives of Tsektran, trade unions and the soviet about the food supply situation. They were opposed by workers, Udin, Utkin and Kravchenko, who attacked the communists for their handling of the crisis. 'The communists are in no condition to rule the country,' they declared, 'so therefore down with the communists and long live the Constituent Assembly.'

'An SR, Mikhailov, raised the resolution which the Riazan–Uralsk railway workers in Moscow had passed which called for the creation of a coalition ministry and the convocation of the Constituent Assembly.' The meeting continued late into the night, discussing the strike, but no real conclusion was arrived at and the meeting re-started on 4 March under the presidency of Kravchenko. 'The railway workers began to talk of going out on to the street. The warning siren was sounded. At the sound of the siren workers from other enterprises, having been agitated by trouble-makers, began to appear. They came from the Kolesnikov, Novaia Etna, Zvezda, Zhest and other works.' The 'Moscow resolution' was put to the workers but was evidently not passed.[90] The local newspaper published a dramatic account of the meeting.

> The seemingly floundering chairman [of the meeting] subtly pursues his line: he considers it a sign of a good democratic tone, on the basis of a note received from a participant in the meeting, or pulled out of his pocket, for the tenth time to chew and chew over again the question of the resolution of the 'Moscow workers', to vote on it, to approve it entirely or take it for information, but in such a way that in the end you don't know whether to approve it entirely or take it for information. Sufler, the representative of the office workers, is situated on an abutment

> beneath the ceiling and from there whips up the meeting saying that by taking the resolution for information only they will betray the 'Moscow workers'. Sufler is zealously helped by 150 loud-mouths, foremen 'in 21' [presumably a shop in the workshops] disrupting the speeches of those orators they do not like. The unseen SR-Kadet hand attempted to do its business but did not succeed.[91]

Eventually, a resolution proposed by Zhuk, the Tsektran representative, was passed. This called for the establishment of a commission of representatives from different enterprises to investigate the food supply situation. At first the mensheviks and SRs present opposed the idea, but eventually agreed to be members. On 6 March the local newspaper reported that the strikers had returned to work the day before but the front page was still taken up with appeals to the workers. An article attacked attempts by 'social traitors' to have a resolution accusing government policies of leading to famine, the destruction of transport and the fuel shortage, approved. The newspaper defended the grain monopoly, claiming that its abolition would lead to high prices. However, with the workers back at their jobs it became easier to neutralize the strike leadership. From the protest of the Moscow workers it appears that the first arrests, such as that of Mikhailov, occurred quite quickly.

The subsequent course of events was reported by *Pravda*. The Commission investigated the food supply situation and proved that there were no 'hidden supplies' and workers began to recall their representatives. The SR and Menshevik Party members were accused of trying to turn the commission into a 'counter-revolutionary centre' by including Red Army soldiers and white-collar employees in it. 'Soon the main trouble-makers were arrested by the Cheka and the movement declined in spite of the efforts of SRs and mensheviks to raise the workers to free those arrested', and on 26 March railway workers failed to respond to a menshevik–SR appeal for workers to go on to the streets on 27 March to protest at Communist Party actions. Forty-one persons were tried for their part in the protests, according to *Pravda*, including nine from the railway workshops, 'the main initiators of the disorders'.[92]

In the autumn of 1920, after the defeat of Wrangel and retreat of the Poles, economic reconstruction in the Donbass was resumed. The social base of the communists in the Donbass had always been narrow and, disregarding the complications introduced by nationalist and

'green' movements (peasant movements, such as that led by the anarchist Nestor Makhno), the mensheviks had usually predominated in local labour organizations. The reoccupation of the region by the communists in the spring of 1920 had been followed by the mass arrest of menshevik activists in Kharkov and in labour organizations. The communists who were active in the region were usually either appointees from outside or, reflecting their marginality to local political life, likely to adopt extreme positions. In the Donbass the Communist Party and trade union organizations were particularly hostile to any attempt to represent workers' aspirations from below.

A contemporary communist writer described the Party's poorly developed labour organizations in the Donbass and how a shortage of personnel often meant that the same person occupied both a leading trade union post and also a leading position in the economic apparatus. Trade unions had not succeeded in organizing workers and 'The mass of workers seek spontaneous solutions and find them in anarchic strikes in the factories or in 'democratic' opposition against the leadership taken to extremes and so on.'[93] At the end of November there was a four-day strike at the Kharkov locomotive-building works, involving over 4000 workers, practically the entire workforce. In the spring this enterprise had been reported as being a Menshevik Party stronghold.[94]

Considering the brittle nature of the relationship between the Communist Party and workers in the region, it is not surprising that the Donbass was one of the first to experience the results of the economic collapse. The state of this relationship was expressed in strong terms in an article published in *Trud* in early 1921. 'Party committees work weakly. They have turned into exclusive communist castes alienated from the mass of workers. Everything is considered from the point of view of personal comfort. Therefore the ordinary worker and mine proletarian and, generally, the honourable toiler nourishes in the Donbass an aversion to communists.'[95]

In January workers' settlements in the Donbass were subject to a mass of rumours, frequently of a millenarian character. Some of these rumours concerned Makhno; many reflected local folk religious beliefs. 'There are in the settlements particularly religious people who read the apocalypse and elucidate it. Men and women and sometimes miners are ready listeners.' Besides predicting famines, wars and fathers fighting sons, they drew on more immediate political events. 'A dragon will appear with golden horns and everything will be taken from the

peasants and nothing given to the workers. Ration cards will be introduced everywhere, people will be numbered and everything will be distributed according to ration cards.' They predicted the downfall of Soviet power and the return of the Tsar on 10 May 1921. Another article describes a 'large *volynka*' in the mines in February and blamed it on the failure to satisfy the expectations raised by the visit of a commission headed by Trotsky at the end of 1920. In March mensheviks were reported as being active in the towns of Iuzovka and Enakievo. The Almazniashinskii and Bakhmutinskii districts were 'sick' and it was reported that elections 'must not begin'.[96]

Unrest also occurred in the metal-working and metallurgical enterprises in the south. There was a strike at the Gartman works in Lugansk at the beginning of January 1921. This was a large factory employing 4000 workers and employees in the summer of 1920 when it was militarized. Relations between workers, trade unions and management were very tense. In November 1920 the factory committee agreed to a request of the enterprise director to call in the Cheka to deal with recalcitrant workers. On 3 January workers stopped work and demanded the distribution of food. The strike was quickly broken by the arrest of ring-leaders. There were problems in the metallurgical enterprises also. Poor food supplies led to unrest and short strikes amongst workers in this sector in the Donbass in the first half of 1921.[97]

Unrest in the south is also interesting for the way it shows how news travelled from region to region, encouraging protest as it went. To the south-west of the Donbass news of the Kronstadt revolt had an impact on workers in Ekaterinoslavl and Aleksandrovsk. The winter of 1920–21 in Ekaterinoslavl was hard and the hostility of the peasantry prevented workers from gathering fuel. The region was hit by a serious typhus epidemic. A non-communist observer recalls the galley proofs of *Izvestiia*, giving the news of the Kronstadt revolt, being thrust into his hand by a printer who was soon arrested in a purge of mensheviks.[98]

The arrested mensheviks included a number of respected local workers. Resolutions demanding their release were passed by local factories and the railway workers, who struck again in June, began an 'Italian strike'. The Bolsheviks responded by distributing extra consumer goods and food to the railway workers but this created envy amongst other workers. 'The Bolsheviks set up a special commission

to satisfy the workers with manufactured goods and sugar and imperceptibly the attention of workers was turned from the Kronstadt events and their consequences to internal arguments and discord over extra *arshiny* of cotton cloth or the incorrect weighing out of half a *funt* off a black block of salt.' Political disaffection amongst Ekaterinoslavl workers did not remain far below the surface and the town was hit by a serious political strike at the beginning of June.[99]

Few workers remained in Aleksandrovsk in early 1921 but the arrival of a group of arrested Kronstadt sailors, being transferred under guard to the Black Sea fleet, led to unrest in the middle of March. The sailors could not proceed to Sevastopol because of 'counter-revolutionary plots' and remained in Aleksandrovsk for a week where 'they wandered about the town and harshly and loudly condemned Soviet power, got through to the mass of workers who were in an oppositional mood with the result that meetings in the factories more and more harshly spoke out against Soviet power'. The Cheka began mass arrests and shot two leading worker mensheviks. 'This deeply upset the mass of workers and they threatened Soviet power with a general strike. The authorities became fearful of this, all the more because the shootings had been carried out without the knowledge of the centre. The workers demanded the setting up of an investigative commission both into the shootings themselves and into the guilt of those arrested.' The author of this account left town before the outcome became clear but he described the mood of the workers at this time. Workers remembered Wrangel's rule with nostalgia and acted on the basis of the hope that the Kronstadt revolt had given them. On the other hand, 'amongst the workers circulated the most fantastic rumours which they believed with a child-like faith, for example, about a rising in Moscow, Orel and Tula'.[100]

Although few details are available, it is clear that there was unrest in the Urals. For example, Maslov reported that in February and March 1921 resolutions calling for political changes were sent by workers in the Urals to the SNK. The resolutions, this source noted, were characterized by demands for the creation of a government consisting of all the socialist parties from the Popular Socialists on the right, but not including the communists, and frequently by an anti-Semitic tone.[101]

At the beginning of February, the main Communist Party newspaper in the Urals reported that the fuel supply crisis for the metallurgy

works in the southern Urals was threatening to become catastrophic and that 'a complete and lengthy halt of factories' was in prospect. The halt of even some workshops demoralized workers, it added. The fuel crisis does not appear to have affected the central Ekaterinburg region so severely. In mid-April it was reported that metallurgical enterprises in the Ekaterinburg district had, in general, worked comparatively normally in the previous three months and that 'a particular shortage of fuel did not occur'. Another report confirms that the first quarter of 1921 in Ekaterinburg did not see a serious crisis and that a severe shortage of food had occurred only in April.[102]

Nonetheless, there were 'hard days' at the end of February in Ekaterinburg. On 2 March the Ekaterinburg provincial trade union council published an appeal to 'all workers, women workers, white-collar employees and trade unionists of the Ekaterinburg province'. It warned that food supply difficulties meant that rations were likely not to be delivered at the full amount in March. The appeal 'called on all workers and women workers to endure the temporary deprivations with fortitude, not to give into the whisperings and counter-revolutionary agitation of the enemies of the toilers who are trying to make use of hard times for their provocative aims and who, by their work, burden the already hard position of the toilers'.[103] Not long before, women workers in the Makarovskaia textile works and clothing workshops had gone on strike in protest against a reduction in rations. Archive sources make it clear that constant changes in food supply to this enterprise had been causing problems for some time. K. N. Samoilova, a leading communist, was credited in playing an important role in ending this strike by speaking to the workers and ensuring an improvement in their material position.[104] The introduction of the new food supply policy lagged in this region. An editorial calling for the trade pickets to be abolished completely was still being published in the main local newspaper at the end of March.[105]

Conclusion

In early 1921 the Communist Party faced what amounted to a revolutionary situation. Industrial unrest was only one aspect of a more general crisis that encompassed the Kronstadt revolt and the peasant risings in Tambov and Western Siberia. The Communist Party overcame the crisis by changing the direction of its economic policy and

applying firm repressive measures where resistance was determined. The diverse popular movements that arose at the end of the Civil War failed to bring about permanent changes in the nature of the Soviet regime because, in the absence of political liberalization, even economic adjustments were bound to be regarded as concessions that could be withdrawn when the Communist Party felt strong enough.

The communists were able to ride out the mass protest by workers in early 1921 for reasons that were very similar to those that had allowed the Tsar to do the same. Protest by workers was not a prelude to Kronstadt nor simply an echo of the peasant risings, but reflected the specific economic interests of workers, and was the product of a specific tradition of opposition to the communists. There were differences of emphasis in the demands raised by workers, peasants and sailors. Workers demanded a lifting of the trade pickets and a more efficient and less corrupt rationing system, whilst peasants called for an end to grain requisitioning. Kronstadt sailors explicitly rejected the Constituent Assembly, whilst workers gave the idea a sympathetic hearing and even their support. Furthermore, the industrial workforce in early 1921 was still scattered and divided. Despite being more united that ever in their opposition to Communist Party policies, some groups of workers stood to benefit from a greater role being given to the market in the economy, whilst other groups stood to lose out. Workers understood their relative position well and links to the village and levels of landownership affected their attitudes to these questions. Workers were still divided by the country's geography. If the food supply crisis caused strikes almost simultaneously in Petrograd and Moscow, the peak of industrial unrest was to occur several weeks later in the Donbass.

Economic differences amongst workers were serious but, for a moment, they were politically united in their opposition to the Communist Party dictatorship. However, the communists remained determined and the political threat represented by the workers was bound to be limited as they lacked a decisive leadership and effective organization. The communists displayed enough flexibility in their economic policies to defuse the immediate crisis but showed few signs of doubt about their exclusive right to rule. Nonetheless, Lenin took the political threat of protest by workers in early 1921 very seriously: 'petty-bourgeois, anarchist elements with the slogans of free trade and in all cases directed against the dictatorship of the proletariat. It made

itself felt in Moscow enterprises, it made itself felt in a number of provincial enterprises. This petty-bourgeois counter-revolution is undoubtedly more dangerous than Denikin, Iudenich and Kolchak taken together.'[106]

5

The aftermath of the *volynka*

The communists retreat

The introduction of the NEP in the wake of the Xth Party Congress in March 1921 did not immediately bring about a improvement in the standard of living of workers. Apart from being the year of the NEP, 1921 was the year of famine. By the summer of 1921 the famine in the mid-Volga provinces had become so serious that large-scale international aid, in the form of the American Relief Administration, was accepted. By the end of 1921 at least twenty-two million Russians were affected by famine. Workers in the famine region itself, in the towns of Samara and Saratov, for example, suffered along with the peasants, as did workers in adjacent regions such as the Urals and Donbass. Workers in Petrograd, Moscow and the Central Industrial Region were insulated to some extent by distance, but could not avoid the impact of such a disaster entirely. Food consumption statistics show that workers were starving in the spring months of 1922, just as they had been in 1919 and 1921, however the mass politicized protest of early 1921 was not repeated.[1]

If the February–March *volynka* had been made possible partly because of a revival in industrial activity, the summer of 1921 saw a collapse of industry so complete there was no longer any question of a strike movement. In Petrograd the mass closures of January and February were not reversed until the autumn. The Urals and Donbass were particularly badly affected. One writer on the Urals sums up the picture thus:

> In the summer of 1921 the metallurgical shops of the Urals works, as a rule, did not operate. In the second half of July and the first half of August not one blast furnace, not one open-hearth furnace, not one rolling mill worked. Production died away. Only in the auxiliary shops did small-scale repair of equipment take place.

An economic conference in October 1921 heard the following description of the Donbass: 'The food supply catastrophe which developed in May and June, and later, led to a sharp reduction in the production curve and gave rise to negative production (when the expenditure of fuel exceeded that extracted) in some places in the Donbass.'[2]

Changes in the size of the workforce reflected this situation. If the size of the industrial workforce (not including railway workers) in October 1920 equalled 100, then by April 1921 it had risen to 114.8, falling to 90.1 by October. The overall figures show that even at this stage the contraction in the metal-working industry was greater than in textiles, the former falling to 82.3 and the latter to 90.7 in October. In Ekaterinburg province alone, the closure of around 200 metal-working enterprises with 18,000 workers was ordered at the beginning of June. Many of these would have been small enterprises, but even the enormous Nadezhdinskii works came to a halt in August. Further north, the Motovilikha works stopped working at the beginning of July. The textile industry did not escape the crisis. The Iaroslavl department of the textile workers' trade union reported that the peak number of working enterprises, twenty, was reached in February 1921, falling to two in July. One sub-district of the union in Ivanovo-Voznesensk province reported in September that almost none of its sixteen enterprises had worked since May.[3]

The mining industry was especially badly affected by the economic shut-down. If the size of the mining industry workforce in October 1920 was 100, by July 1921 it had jumped to 145.8, falling rapidly to 106.4 in October. This fall was almost entirely accounted for by the Donbass where the overall number of workers fell by almost forty per cent between April and September 1921, with the number of face workers falling by almost fifty per cent between February and September. Another industry which suffered particularly badly was transport. On 1 May 1921 there were 1,256,000 railway workers and 377,000 water transport workers, but by 1 January 1922 this had fallen to 931,000 railway workers and 225,000 water transport workers, a fall of roughly twenty-five per cent.[4] If workers had taken to the streets in February and March with emotions of anger and disillusionment at the failure of the programme of economic expansion, then protest later in the year, against such a background, could reflect little more than desperation.

In general, this reduction in the size of the workforce continued in

1922. If the size of the metal-working industry workforce in October 1921 equalled 100, then by January 1922 it was 99.6, falling to 89.7 by October. In industries where the workforce had been more stable in 1921 the falls in 1922 were more drastic. The size of the tobacco industry workforce fell from 100 in October 1921 to 64.2 in October 1922 and the food-processing industry from 100 to 71.9. There was one important exception to this picture. The index for the textile industry workforce rose rapidly from 100 in October 1921 to 132.5 in January 1922 and to 169.2 in October.[5] The reason for this contrast was the ability of the textile industry to take advantage of the expanding peasant market for its products and this was reflected in the character of the industrial unrest in this period. In brief, the impact of the NEP was different for different groups of workers, particularly for the two main categories – metal workers and textile workers – and so whilst both groups continued to express discontent in late 1921 and after, their grievances had different economic roots and the threat of united action with a political character was diminished.

The lifting of the trade pickets was only one of a series of measures designed to meet workers' demands in the area of food supplies. After the outbreak of the *volynka*, emergency measures were taken to increase the supply of food and goods. Stocks were released from warehouses and distributed to workers. On 7 April the SNK approved a decree which allowed enterprises to pay their workers bonuses from their own production.[6] This measure, which contradicted the whole drift of communist policy since 1918, was a partial recognition of the futility of trying to combat pilfering by workers who were starving. Also, besides being a measure which enabled enterprises to pay their workers, and so maintain production at a critical moment, it was a significant concession to the market and laid the basis for the gradual establishment of enterprise-level wages funds. Food supply difficulties had been the single most important factor behind the *volynka* and, as they gradually came to constitute a significant part of a worker's income again, wages became the workers' primary concern.

Concessions to workers were peripheral to the NEP that eventually began to emerge in the summer of 1921, which was symbolized by the abolition of the requisitioning of peasant surpluses and its replacement with a tax in kind. Lenin had first put the idea to the Politburo on 8 February and a month later a draft was approved by the Xth Party Congress. As it stood, the draft decree imposed important

restrictions on the rights of peasants to dispose of their surpluses. Between its approval at the Xth Party Congress and its promulgation by the SNK towards the end of March, these restrictions were gradually removed. In a first draft peasants were to be allowed to exchange their surpluses 'within the limits of local economic exchange ... both through co-operative organizations and at the markets and bazaars'. Then, in the final version, the limitation to 'local economic exchange' was removed.[7] These final concessions could only receive a half-hearted welcome from workers. During the *volynka*, workers, realizing their weak bargaining position, had not so much demanded 'free trade', as this decree implied, but rather the abolition of pointless restrictions on the movement of foodstuffs and that action be taken against abuses in the food supply apparatus.

The introduction of the NEP inevitably placed a question mark over the future of the rationing system because the level set for the tax in kind for 1921–22 marked a considerable reduction on the amount of grain requisitioned in 1920–21. The grain delivery quota for 1920–21 had been 423 million *pudy*, whereas the grain tax in kind for 1921–22 was fixed at 240 million *pudy*. For potatoes the figures were, respectively, 110 and 60, for meat 25.4 and 6.5, and so on.[8] The famine made it unlikely that even these amounts would be received for distribution by the state as rations and the obvious implication was that the difference would be made up by the market. The abolition of rations, although they never even supplied the bulk of a worker's requirements, amounted to the abolition of an important state subsidy to workers and was the cause of further industrial unrest. In response, some leading communist trade unionists tried to ensure that the trade unions would regulate exchange between town and country, whilst others attempted to retain the centralized distribution of foodstuffs.

Those trade unionists who wanted to retain a dominant role for the state in the allocation of foodstuffs feared that giving workers bonuses out of their production would undermine the position of heavy industry and they therefore insisted that supplies be directed to enterprises through inter-union organizations, such as the provincial trade union councils, according to centrally determined norms which would protect industry from the market. A conference on wage rates held in Moscow at the beginning of March voted to reject all ideas of giving workers bonuses from their own production and stressed the value of norms in raising productivity. A few days later the Moscow congress

of trade unions heard Lozovskii call for factory committees to give up supply functions and for inter-union organizations to be given greater rights in this area.[9]

The run-up to the Fourth Trade Union Congress in mid-May showed that trade unionists were deeply divided about how to cope in the new economic climate. Tomskii enthusiastically embraced the idea of giving bonuses to workers from their own production. In theses published at the opening of the congress he called for their 'fullest implementation' as the only possible way of procuring peasant surpluses to improve the position of workers. He was careful to stress that trade unions should control trade to prevent 'possible speculative-individualist exchange and the removal of materials and instruments from the factories'. Finally, Tomskii called for the 'naturalization of wages' which was the logical extension of the system of giving workers bonuses from their own production. At a meeting of the Communist Party fraction of delegates before the Congress, Riazanov was able to mobilize considerable support for 'a complete transition to the naturalization of wages'. A communist trade unionist who was present wrote that Riazanov 'found support because of the sharp decline in the purchasing power of paper money'.[10] This approach was reflected in instructions issued by the metal workers' trade union, still dominated by the Workers' Opposition, in early April. Considering the views that Shliapnikov had expressed on wages policy in 1920, this is not surprising. In the same vein a conference of factory committees in the Moscow metal-working industry stressed the need to ensure that workers received a 'living minimum' and the role of individual enterprises in carrying out wages policy. It approved the suggestion that enterprises should set up special auxiliary workshops to produce goods for exchange with the peasantry.[11]

After a disagreement with the Politburo over the degree of political and organizational autonomy that trade unions should enjoy, Tomskii and Riazanov were forced to leave the Congress and support for a decentralized system of wages was inevitably weakened. The Menshevik Party speaker, Shtulman, came nearest to proposing a decentralized wages system, with payments to workers in their own production playing a significant role, but he insisted that workers should continue to receive a basic living ration from the state.[12] The desire to continue some form of state supply to workers was dominant. On 10 May a proposal on the subject, which had been approved by the

VTsSPS, was put by Iu. M. Larin and Goltsman to the Politburo. This proposal entailed the establishment of a state wages fund consisting of foodstuffs partly received through the tax in kind and partly through the exchange of manufactured goods with the peasantry through workers' co-operatives. The Politburo rejected this proposal and called on the authors to re-write it. When the Communist Party delegates to the Fourth Trades Union Congress met a week later they approved Goltsman's theses by 567 votes to 317.[13]

A withering attack on this decision, written as part of an article on the Fourth Trade Union Congress a few months later by Artem, the leader of the mine workers' trade union, explained why there was such support for the continuation of some form of state supply.

> Instead of an audacious revolutionary upsurge, the mass of the Congress sighed for the guaranteed supply of workers by a hungry country. The petty-bourgeois illusion of a guarantee for the working factories at the expense of the worker in the street, no matter how utopian, nonetheless must have appeared as a balsam and spell against the evil spirits of discontent and revolt in a devastated country.[14]

At a meeting on 22 May the Politburo passed a resolution expressing its continued opposition to Goltsman but diplomatically played down the differences between the two sides and claimed that it wished to refrain from interference in trade union affairs. The Communist Party fraction nevertheless immediately obliged by over-turning its decision to support Goltsman. On 24 May delegates passed a Politburo-approved resolution which had been drawn up by V. Ia. Chubar and was supported by V. V. Shmidt and Lozovskii at the Congress. This resolution adopted a middle course between state supply and enterprise-level wages funds and established that, where possible, the supply of rations should continue and called for the introduction, as an experiment, of collective supply in some enterprises. It also stressed the growing role of bonuses to workers in their own production and the creation of enterprise-level goods funds.[15]

By collective supply was meant the distribution of foodstuffs from a central fund to individual enterprises in accordance with how their production programme was fulfilled (rather than the size of their workforce), under the supervision of inter-union organizations. It was hoped that this would act as an incentive to enterprises to reduce their workforces. The approval of collective supply and the removal of

Tomskii from the scene allowed those trade unionists who wanted to continue some form of state supply a free hand. One of Lenin's criticisms of Larin's original proposal had been that it proposed 'the general transition to collective supply'. In the summer of 1921 articles in the press frequently presented collective supply as an industrial panacea. However, by the autumn of 1921 it was becoming clear that even this much-reduced rationing system was unable to guarantee workers adequate supplies. In a report to the October 1921 plenum of the VTsSPS, Shmidt claimed that collective supply was leading to significant increases in productivity but had to report that the original plan to put 250,000 workers on the system had had to be scaled down to 115,000 and that in August only one-third of these could be satisfied. In the autumn there was increased optimism about economic prospects and the list was expanded to include 119,00 workers, but the days of any form of state supply to workers were numbered and at the February 1922 plenum of the VTsSPS Shmidt admitted that centralized supply to workers had collapsed because of the food supply situation.[16]

Pressure on the rationing system did not only come from the paucity of resources at the disposal of the state, but was also being undermined by the greater scope being given to the market by the NEP. Enterprises which were able to exchange their production with the peasantry easily, such as those in the textile, tobacco and food-processing industries, were able to offer their workers better wages. The decisions of the Fourth Trade Union Congress had been designed to avoid this by not only ensuring the continued supply of rations to heavy industry, but also by regulating and redistributing wages through the inter-union organizations. At the February 1922 plenum of the VTsSPS Rudzutak described the consequences:

> State regulation discredited our work in the eyes of the broad mass of workers for the latter formed the impression that trade unions were not bodies endeavouring to improve the position of the working class but, on the contrary, that the bodies that are concerned with their interests are those economic bodies which break the norms set by the trade unions not to reduce wages but to increase them.

Another speaker said that there were reports from the localities of workers voting to leave their trade unions.[17]

By 1922 workers in different industries were facing different economic conditions. Statistics for wages give part of the picture. In

January 1922 metal workers received 82.6 roubles per month (calculated against the cost of a selection of foodstuffs) whilst textile workers received 65.9 roubles. By the end of the year the wages of metal workers had increased more rapidly than those of textile workers, to 156.2 roubles, as compared to 115 roubles for textile workers, but if comparisons are made with differentials in 1913 the increase is not so impressive. In 1913 metal workers in Moscow had received thirty-two per cent above the average wage of industrial workers. In early 1922 they received only two per cent more and, by the end of the year, still only twelve per cent more. Textile workers had received eighty-eight per cent of the average industrial wage in 1913, 94.3 per cent in early 1922 and had slipped back to 77.6 per cent by the end of the year. In contrast, food-processing workers had received eighty-four per cent of the average industrial wage in 1913, but fifteen per cent more than the average in early 1922 and still seven per cent more at the end of the year. In Petrograd province the relative position of metal workers hardly improved at all, whilst that of textile workers, in contrast with Moscow, did improve markedly.[18] So the position of metal workers in absolute terms did usually improve in 1922 but in relative terms they were still lagging.

Despite the slight improvement in workers' incomes in 1921–22 that these figures indicated, there was a strong perception amongst workers in heavy industry that they were losing out from the NEP and, in practice, they were on the defensive. A resolution passed by a conference of metal workers in the Moscow province in early 1922 called, contrary to the trade union line which was emerging, for greater trade union influence over economic decision-making and 'for Soviet power to ensure the maximum protection for the proletariat from damage to its interests in state enterprises and its defence from exploitation in private enterprises'. The feeling that the NEP was not in the interests of metal workers stemmed from the fact that the abolition of rationing hit metal workers, who had been more likely to receive priority supply under War Communism, especially badly. At a meeting of the presidium of the metal workers' trade union Central Committee at the beginning of 1922, Vorobev described how attempts to provide workers in the southern metallurgical enterprises with a living wage 'had led to the exhaustion of the wages funds in the factories and to the demoralization of the working masses of the enterprises'.[19] The retention of the central distribution of money wages for heavy industry,

whose main customer was the state, in conditions of runaway inflation, compounded the disadvantage since payment was invariably delayed by shortages of cash.

Workers in light industry were not so severely affected by the abolition of rations and bargained with greater confidence. This was partly because enterprises could realize their goods locally and ensure prompt payment to their workers. Furthermore, workers in the textile and other industries producing for the consumer market continued to receive a relatively high proportion of their wages in kind out of their own production. It was reported in November 1921 that collective supply had had to be supplemented at the Prokhorovskaia textile mill with the distribution to workers of items from the enterprise's production to cope with the growing workforce. An improvement in morale amongst the workers was noted. At the beginning of 1922 metal workers received 84.5 per cent of their wages in kind and textile workers 80.6 per cent. By the end of the year the equivalent figures were 18.9 per cent and 36.8 per cent, reflecting the disappearance of the metal workers' ration at the beginning of the year and the survival of wages in kind in the textile industry. In the provinces, further away from the sources of cash, the tendency to pay wages in kind was even greater. Some workers in the textile industry in the Central Industrial Region were paid exclusively in kind out of the production of their enterprise.[20]

Despite relative advantages in some respects, the lives of textile workers were still very hard. Contemporary Soviet economists stressed the disadvantages of payment of wages in kind. E. O. Kabo observed that the market gave as much cause for complaint amongst workers as the state rationing system.

> Just how little the clothing that is given satisfies the vital needs of the average family is clear from the fact that despite the extremely small amount of money in circulation, they resort to buying clothes on the market and selling, in order to increase their monetary resources, the clothing that they have been given. Reading into the texts of individual budgets we see that mostly cotton cloth, coarse cloth and woollen cloth is sold and essential winter footwear, outer clothing, scarves and hats are bought. New goods are sold, and always below their market value, second-hand goods are bought and often above market prices.[21]

Direct confrontation between the regime and workers was not reduced simply because of the introduction of the market as the major

determinant of workers' wages. In 1921–22 the apparatus of militarization and mobilizations was dismantled and the supply of labour began to be determined by the market as well. Labour mobilizations continued to occur in 1921. For example, on 23 March it was decreed that miners should be mobilized from the Red Army with strict measures to be applied to labour deserters. On 24 June labour service in the sugar refining industry was decreed for the able-bodied population living near sugar plantations and refineries.[22] However, these were measures taken to deal with specific emergencies and the general trend was in the other direction.

Workers were no longer to be tied to their enterprise. On 6 April 1921 it was decreed that the VTsSPS, VSNKh and NKProd should work out rules to facilitate the changing of jobs or transfer of workers and white-collar employees if it was desired for personal reasons, or if it was in the interest of the enterprise. As early as 24 March the central and local committees for labour conscription were abolished and their functions passed to NKTruda. On 12 October it was decreed that the mobilization of workers for industry should cease. Similarly, a decree of 21 November removed the concept of desertion from legislation on absenteeism. On 14 December the Commission for the Struggle against Labour Desertion was abolished.[23] By the autumn of 1921 a labour market was taking shape in which workers were not always well placed. The reduction in the size of the workforce continued into 1922 and unemployment became a serious problem. In October 1921 new regulations were issued laying out the benefits for workers made redundant. The growing threat of unemployment was an important factor in discouraging protest, and redundancies were deliberately used to rid the workforce of opposition activists.

As the regime gradually moved to reduce the extent of its direct responsibility for workers, so trade unions debated passionately what their new role should be. This debate reached a peak at the Fourth Trade Union Congress. At a meeting of the congress Communist Party fraction on 17 May, which included the great majority of delegates, Riazanov proposed a resolution, whose text has never been published, which is usually described in the Soviet literature as proposing the establishment of 'independent trade unions'. Tomskii sympathized with Riazanov's position. In the run-up to the congress he failed to pass on the Communist Party Central Committee draft resolution to the bureau of the VTsSPS Communist Party fraction and instead passed it to a

junior VTsSPS official as a resolution from the Petrograd delegation. Lenin later asked whether Tomskii's role had represented 'a mistake or a crime'. When the Communist Party delegates met on the eve of the congress Stalin spoke for the Central Committee but the tone of his remarks to Riazanov, who was sitting next to him on the platform – 'Shut up, you buffoon!' – caused Riazanov to walk out and further alienated the congress delegates who passed Riazanov's resolution. Lenin was forced to address the delegates and had to impose party discipline to ensure that the appropriate resolution was approved.[24]

The details of this affair have been shrouded in secrecy but Riazanov's resolution is unlikely to have followed menshevik ideas on independent trade unions, and the claim that it did is related to the fact that Riazanov was shot for 'Menshevism' in the 1930s. Instead, his resolution should be seen as part of a movement amongst some communist trade unionists who expected the NEP to entail a large degree of capitalist industry and so wanted to allow workers the maximum organizational autonomy. The VTsSPS and the provincial trade union councils would have the maximum of autonomy from the Communist Party and individual unions the maximum of autonomy from the VTsSPS and provincial trade union councils. This last issue found reflection at the congress where a resolution supporting the latter trend, proposed by Krol, the leader of the food-processing workers' trade union, was only defeated by 593 votes to 453. Despite this debate being phrased in terms of organization, it is clear that some communist trade unionists were prepared to envisage a degree of political relaxation. When Krol spoke at the February 1922 VTsSPS plenum he proposed that central trade union organizations lose the right to disband lower trade union bodies. Rudzutak replied, 'He says that each group of members can autonomously set their own organizational forms. And what if this should take the form of a Christian union?' Krol replied, 'Let it be organized.'[25] The political implications of these abstruse debates sometimes rose to the surface.

On 18 May 1921 a plenum of the Communist Party Central Committee was called. It was agreed that Tomskii should be removed from further work in the congress and be suspended from work in the VTsSPS. He was sent away to organize trade unions in Turkestan. Riazanov was permanently forbidden from any further participation in trade union work. Shliapnikov and Kutuzov were also criticized for their roles in the débâcle. The subordination of trade unions to the

Communist Party was embodied in regulations, published at the end of July, that called on local party committees to take the most active role in the conduct of trade unions elections and gave them the right to remove any member of a trade union fraction.[26] With the subordination of the last semi-autonomous institutions in Soviet Russia, these regulations had wide ramifications for the future development of the country's political system.

Lenin must have felt ambivalent about the immediate outcome of the congress. The reasons for Lenin's uncompromising attitude towards Tomskii are not immediately obvious, even when his usual concern to prevent political activity outside Communist Party control is taken into account. Tomskii had supported Lenin's platform in the trade union debate and after his removal from work in the trade union movement the leadership of the VTsSPS passed to Andreev, who had supported Trotsky. The VTsSPS became, for a while, a centre of opposition to the NEP policies. It appears that Lenin may have made more general concessions to supporters of Trotsky in the trade union controversy in order to rally support for keeping a tight political grip on the unions. After the Xth Party Congress Tsektran was not abolished and *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* reported that when Lenin addressed the Communist Party delegates to the Fourth Trade Union Congress there had been shouts of, 'You promised to abolish the statization of unions; you have deceived us.'[27]

The problems that the leadership of the VTsSPS created in 1921–22 over its insistence on centrally controlling wages have already been described. Towards the end of the year Tomskii returned to work in the VTsSPS and the general involvement of trade unions in production began to be reduced and management was passed to technical and administrative specialists. At its February 1922 plenum the VTsSPS announced a 'new course in trade union policy'. Rudzutak described how the relationship between workers and the trade unions had deteriorated since the Revolution.

> Trade unions, on the one hand appeared in relation to workers, to a certain extent, as bosses, who laid down how workers must work, what wage they must receive and what part of this wage they should lose for going absent and, on the other hand, unions entered the business of, interfered in the work of, economic bodies, and had to take the blame, to a certain extent, for a whole series of those bodies' shortcomings and take responsibility for, and smooth out all misunderstandings, and so on.

> These interests in no way coincided with and related to the needs which workers faced in the factories.

As a result, factory committees were to cease all involvement in production and concentrate on defending workers' interests. The large number of factory committee commissions, including the labour disciplinary courts, were to be abolished. Tomskii went further and he forcefully argued for the implementation of one-man management. 'Now,' he said, 'when we are too poor and the general economic climate is too unfavourable to put the question of drawing workers into management and training in practice, it is put aside and is replaced by the task of training workers to manage but, of stretching out this training over a long period of years.' Even more controversially, if very cautiously, Tomskii raised the possibility of trade unions sanctioning strikes, even in state enterprises.[28]

Tomskii argued that the Communist Party's new course towards the trade unions was not the same as that which mensheviks had proposed, but the description which he gave their programme, conciliation tribunals and the 'smoothing over' of conflicts, was very close to what he was advocating. His views differed from the mensheviks' in that trade unions were from now on politically shackled, and this was now irreversible, even if they did begin to enjoy some freedom of manoeuvre to bargain on behalf of workers. At the February plenum of the VTsSPS Tomskii encouraged trade unions to bargain hard for high wages. Furthermore, the VTsSPS would set an average wage, 'Below this level wages in Soviet Russia must not fall.'[29] For the moment, however, the change in economic policy had not made it significantly easier for workers to survive.

When Dan was released from prison in January 1922 and was given a week in Moscow to prepare for his expulsion from the country, he was struck by the way in which the private economy had re-created pre-revolutionary social distinctions.

> In almost all establishments trade had been started up. But, alas, they were almost entirely 'colonial foodstuff' shops, bakeries, patisseries and cafes, that is shops and undertakings which counted on the custom of quite well-off people. By the pastry-shops often stood little queues and the customers paid millions of roubles for a little cake ... for the first time, after many years, I heard from the lips of coachmen, waiters in cafés, porters at the station a slavish form of address that had completely fallen out of usage, 'Master'.

It was not only mensheviks and ordinary Russians who believed that pre-1917 forms were reasserting themselves. Faced with the consternation of Communist Party members, Lenin promised an end to 'the retreat' at the beginning of 1922.[30]

The workers retreat

The suppression of the February–March *volynka* did not bring an immediate end to mass protest by workers. Dan described the impact of continuing unrest on the 'political section' of the Cheka prison in Petrograd in the summer of 1921.

> In the workers' districts in Petersburg all summer there was unrest. Factories that had stopped work because of shortages of fuel and raw materials, now began work and then closed again. Each opening was accompanied by the presentation of certain demands by the starving workers, and the failure to satisfy these demands brought in their wake unrest, strikes and even in some places (outside the Moscow gate) attempts to organize mass street demonstrations. The beginning of April, May and June were marked by such disorders.[31]

Mass protest broke out with new force in Ukraine in the late spring and summer. The main reason for the continuation of mass unrest in Ukraine, after it had begun to die down in Russia, was the decision not to abolish War Communism policies, including militarized labour policies, grain requisitioning and the trade monopoly, straightaway. Z. Iu. Arbatov, a non-communist observer, described how in Ekaterinoslavl, towards the end of May, food supplies ran out and crowds of workers and their families from the railway workshops began to gather. The main Communist Party newspaper in Ukraine, *Kommunist*, reported that at the end of May a strike broke out amongst workers in the wagon repair workshops but claimed that they had recently received better supplies. The Ekaterinoslavl workers clearly had strong traditions of organization. A meeting of strikers at first only discussed food supplies but soon proceeded to the election of a strike committee which consisted of fifteen workers. 'Representatives of Soviet power' responded to the strikers' complaints about food supplies by offering extra rations in return for the repair of 170 wagons, but the workers refused to agree to this, although they reduced their demands. The demand of the local trade union that the strike committee be disbanded was rejected by the workers.

Kommunist noted that the proportion of communists in the railway workshops had fallen and relations between workers and the authorities were brittle in the extreme. The strike was quickly politicized and its leaders were described by *Kommunist* as 'non-Party workers of an SR, menshevik and Petliurist (Ukrainian nationalist) colour'. The strike committee put a series of political ultimatums that were very similar in content to the demands of the Kronstadt rebels, 'Many of the resolutions put to the meeting almost completely, word for word, coincided with the resolutions of the Kronstadt rebels.' The next day protest spread to the other workshops. The very close similarity of the demands of the Ekaterinoslavl workers to those of the Kronstadt rebels is evidence of their consciousness of being part of a wider movement but even more impressive is the speed and effectiveness with which the strike spread. On 1 June, by a pre-arranged signal, representatives of the main large Ekaterinoslavl enterprises, the Brianskii and Trubochnoi works, joined the meeting of railway workers. Arbatov described the scene.

> Around three o'clock on 1 June the siren of the railway workshops sounded the alarm. Like terrified beasts, with a wild roar, the whistles of all the stationary engines sounded; the dark masses of the factories replied with frightening hoots and with nervous modulating groans merged the cries of the vessels of the Red Dnepr fleet which was at the mouth of the river. Enormous crowds of exhausted workers headed to the railway administration. Through the hum of the menacing crowd of about one thousand and the nightmarish roar of the sirens clearly could be heard the word 'bread'! Hungry, repressed and prostrate workers left their workshops and entreatingly called beneath the windows of the administration for 'bread'! Work on the railways came to a halt.

Klimenko, the local Communist Party leader, was instructed 'to put down the rebellion without mercy. ... Use Budennyi's cavalry.' When General K. E. Voroshilov, who was in the town, tried to 'calm' the crowd, workers threw rocks at him, and the head of the railway militia, who drew his pistol, was captured by a pursuing crowd and thrown from a fourth-floor window. A number of railway Cheka agents, who were responsible for the trade pickets and combatting absenteeism, were savagely beaten. Klimenko was hit on the chest by a rock as the workers shouted, 'Down with the torturers! ... Down with the tyrants! ... Death to the usurpers!' *Kommunist* confirms the beating of representatives of Soviet power and the trade unions by young workers.

A train was prepared and the driver instructed to spread the strike around the network. Telegraph operators were told to send messages throughout the Soviet Republic calling for 'free soviets'. Soon an area up to fifty miles around Ekaterinoslavl was affected. S. Budyennyi's Cossacks hesitated to put down the workers and during the night of 1 June the Cheka carried out mass arrests, holding about 200 workers. Arbatov reports that in the evening of 2 June a court was held to judge those who had participated in what local communists called a 'little Kronstadt'. Fifteen workers were ordered to be shot immediately and the rest to be sent to the Ukrainian Cheka headquarters in Kharkov. The condemned were taken to the River Dnepr, shot and their bodies thrown in. The authorities forbade their families to go to the river to retrieve the corpses.[32]

A description of the trial of twenty strike leaders on 2 June was published in *Kommunist* in November 1921. The authorities claimed that most of the leaders were not workers but low-level managerial and technical personnel, office-workers, draughtsmen, telegraph operators and so on. The leader of the strike was Shapovalov, an 'office worker, small property owner and complete kulak'. He had formerly served the tsarist regime and had been sympathetic to the Petliurists. His main assistant was an 'office-worker-time-keeper' who had managed to serve in both Petliura's army and the Cheka. An article in *Kommunist* divided the accused into three categories. First, six young workers between 19 and 21 years old who were accused of beating up representatives of Soviet power. Secondly, there were three workers who had admitted their guilt and appeared to have been present as witnesses for the prosecution. The main body of the accused were described as former members of other parties, including an SR veteran, although all of them claimed that their political organizations had fallen apart and none were party members at the time of the strike.[33] The article did not indicate what sentences these men received.

After the strike the communists held a series of meetings and conferences amongst the workers. Arbatov described one of them. The first to speak was Voroshilov who spoke at length about the suppression of the Kronstadt revolt and the treatment meted out to the rebels. Budennyi also warned the workers of the consequences of further protest. After Voroshilov guaranteed speakers immunity, a debate was opened and a local menshevik, Gurvich, eloquently condemned the Communist Party regime. Hidden amongst the crowd were Cheka

agents, who were supposed to note down the names of those workers who supported anti-Soviet speeches, but the response to Gurvich was so overwhelming they could do very little. Later, Kh. G. Rakovskii, Bukharin and M. V. Frunze were sent to address the Ekaterinoslavl workers.[34]

The continuation of the extreme militarization policies implemented in the Donbass in the autumn of 1920 through into the summer of 1921 led to confrontation in that region. Unrest had hit the Donbass in March, and in April warnings were already being made about falls in production due to discontent amongst workers. Iu. A. Remeiko, a communist trade unionist, reported that the summer crisis was not caused merely by food supply problems, but also by 'incorrect economic management'. On 1 June the head of a brigade of the Don Labour Army reported that 'in the past days, in connection with interruptions in the supply of bread to the workers, several mines in the Bakhmutinskii district have stopped work and a number are threatened with flooding'. He continued that special units had been formed to replace stokers and specialists if they should strike. Reports showed that work had stopped in other districts. Remeiko stressed that this was not merely a case of hungry workers going home, since anti-Soviet agitation was also being reported.

The mood of workers was hostile and armed guards were posted at the mines. The following orders were issued:

1. All communist battalions, at every centre, except Novorossiisk and Makeevka, should have every day twenty armed men free from work, in full combat readiness to act at a minute's notice where the situation demands; and
2. To have ready a sufficient quantity of armed men to guard both the enterprises and those workers who are working in case of excesses by those who are not working.

Remeiko was not able to discover to what extent 'excesses' occurred but concludes that a significant factor contributing to the tense atmosphere was the policy of statizing the trade unions and the resort to coercive labour discipline.[35]

In general, as the NEP policies were gradually implemented and the market came more and more to determine the conditions workers lived under, mass outbreaks of politicized protest became less common. This was not only because of the declining role of the state

in determining the economic position of workers, but also because the remaining possibilities for opposition socialist parties and groupings to provide organization and direction for workers disappeared in 1921–22. In the first instance the *volynka* and the confusion amongst communists following the introduction of the NEP gave a fillip to opposition activists. Outside the two capitals the mensheviks were able to report continued successes in soviet and trade union elections in Vologda, Vitebsk and Smolensk.[36] However, these were short-lived. Against a background of severe communist repression the mensheviks managed to get only eighteen representatives elected to the Moscow Soviet in April 1921. At the Fourth Trade Union Congress the mensheviks could only claim a pathetic eight or nine delegates out of 2357 with a vote and a further 748 non-voting delegates. Significantly, whereas Menshevik Party resolutions at previous congresses had picked up non-Party support they now received fewer votes than their number of delegates.[37]

During 1921 the last activity by opposition socialist parties was suppressed. Maslov made a rather arbitrary survey of 133 SR members known to him and who still lived in Russia in August 1921. Over ninety per cent of those included in his list had been party members before 1917 and so it was heavily weighted towards the most determined. By August 1921 only thirty-seven per cent of them would still have considered themselves SRs, let alone have been politically active. At the end of 1921 he estimated that what had once been the most popular political party in the country had less than one hundred active supporters in the ten central provinces. In the spring of 1922 those leaders of the SRs that remained in Soviet Russia were put on trial and only saved from execution by foreign pressure.[38]

All remaining Menshevik Party organizations were broken. On 25 February 1921 practically all the activists of the Moscow Menshevik Party organization, 160 people, were arrested and consigned to the Butyrka prison. In Petrograd there were similar mass arrests of opposition socialists. Dan gives an amusing account of his own case. On 26 February the Cheka called round to his flat at four in the afternoon but Dan had gone to the theatre to hear Shaliapin sing and, because of the introduction of martial law in the city, the performance had had to begin early which, by chance, meant that he had left his flat before they called. He was arrested on his return from the theatre. Elsewhere, following menshevik successes, there were mass arrests in Samara,

Briansk, Rostov on Don, Saratov and Kharkov in February and March.[39]

At the Fourth Trade Union Congress Gonikberg protested about the dispersal of provincial trade union conferences in Vologda and Vitebsk because they had anti-communist majorities. *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* filled in some of the details. In Vologda, at the provincial conference, the Menshevik Party resolution, 'On the Current Moment', received 137 votes and the Communist Party resolution ninety-six. A Menshevik Party resolution on wages was also passed and the communists left the hall. In Vitebsk, on 16 April, the provincial metal workers' congress passed a Menshevik Party resolution by picking up non-Party support. The provincial trade union council dispersed the congress as 'counter-revolutionary'. Menshevik Party resolutions were passed in local metal-working enterprises. Mensheviks also secured the largest number of delegates to the provincial print workers congress. The trade union council dispersed it also. In September *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* reported that in May and June mensheviks in Vitebsk had suffered 'a cruel terror'. Local metal workers had been arrested, including workers from an enterprise connected with the Committee for the Struggle with Unemployment who were not connected with the party but were sentenced to two to five years in concentration camps for 'sympathy with Menshevism'.[40]

By the beginning of 1922 the only Menshevik Party organization still 'above ground' was in Moscow. In January 1922 five mensheviks were elected to the Moscow Soviet: it was the last time they took part in elections. *Pravda* reported three mensheviks and three SRs were present when the new soviet met. One of the mensheviks, Ossovskii, who was elected by the 27th Print works, was accused, in July, of participating in Kolchak's government and was recalled by the print works.[41]

The autumn of 1921 saw the suppression of the last labour organization in Soviet Russia that was not controlled by the Communist Party – the Moscow board of the chemical workers' trade union. Menshevik strength amongst chemical workers owed a great deal to the popularity of Gonikberg, the union leader, but its survival also reflects the reluctance of some leading communist trade unionists in Moscow to suppress labour organizations which clearly enjoyed strong support amongst workers. Gonikberg himself enjoyed good relations with some leading communists. During the Moscow Soviet election

campaign in spring 1921 Gonikberg was arrested but was released through the efforts of Lozovskii. Even after the disbanding of the Moscow board of the chemical workers' trade union, he was one of the few mensheviks to secure election to the Moscow Soviet in February 1922.[42] The mass protest by workers of February 1921, in which chemical workers had participated, may have been the decisive factor in the decision to disband the chemical workers' union. On 27 April the Central Committee of the chemical workers' trade union called for its Moscow board to be disbanded. On 30 May the Moscow Communist Party Committee called on the trade union council to disband the Moscow board also.[43]

During the summer the communists mounted an intensive campaign for the elections to the union's provincial congress which was due to take place at the beginning of October. Communist Party organizations were instructed to send activists into the enterprises and to direct special attention to women and young chemical workers.[44] The communists concentrated their attention on the main chemical enterprise in Moscow, the Bogatyr works, which was traditionally a Menshevik Party stronghold. A new manager who had been appointed in May sacked 200 workers and said that those who promised to support him in future would be allowed to return and would be rewarded with extra foodstuffs. Shortly afterwards workers at the enterprise approved a Communist Party resolution. Before the elections to the provincial congress the communists gave the Bogatyr workers a new wage scale and promised them bonuses in cloth if mensheviks were not elected.[45]

Communist success at the congress appeared assured. The Communist Party press published, almost daily, reports of the successful election of its candidates and the approval of party resolutions. At a meeting at the Bogatyr works on 16 September the Menshevik Party manifesto for the congress was approved by 260 votes to 229 but the meeting was broken up before the election of delegates could take place. Three days later a list of candidates headed by the communist director was approved and the Menshevik Party list, headed by Gonikberg, rejected. Nonetheless, the mensheviks still managed to gain a majority of delegates to the congress. *Pravda* reported that ninety-one communists were elected to the congress and 129 mensheviks and their supporters. In addition, there was a group of twenty-three non-Party, pro-communist Bogatyr workers.[46] The main debate took place on 4 October and a resolution in favour of independent trade unions

was passed by ten votes. Shortly after the Communist Party delegates walked out, the union premises were seized and the setting up of a Red Union was announced. A menshevik activist wrote in his memoirs that meetings at twelve enterprises protested at the disbanding of the union but workers were threatened with redundancy if they continued to support the mensheviks.[47]

At the Xth Party Congress Lenin managed to secure an enormous majority for his platform on trade unions. However, he clearly believed that the Workers' Opposition represented a serious threat to Communist Party rule and unexpectedly put two additional resolutions to the delegates, 'On Unity' and 'The Anarcho-Syndicalist Deviation in Our Party', before the closure of the congress. On the evening of 14 March Lenin addressed a meeting of 200 ex-underground bolshevik activists at which these resolutions were discussed. Lenin's language clearly betrayed the depth of the crisis that the Communist Party was facing. He described the threat the Party faced as being more serious than that posed by Denikin and Kolchak, but representatives of the Workers' Opposition and Democratic Centralist groupings refused to retract their views. Lenin became angry and described the point in the resolution, 'On Unity', which threatened expulsion from the Party as a punishment for factionalism, 'metaphorically as a machine gun which should be placed, loaded and even aimed to prevent factionalism and if the decision to disband factions was broken, so to speak "fire at them by faction".' The use of such a metaphor in the midst of the armed suppression of the Kronstadt revolt greatly upset some of those present and the next day Lenin apologized for his remarks.[48]

In 1921 the Central Committee worked hard to destroy Workers' Opposition influence in the metal workers' trade union. In August 1921 Lenin demanded that Shliapnikov be expelled from the Party for breaking the regulations laid down in the resolution, 'On Unity'. The Central Committee did not support him but Shliapnikov was removed from the commission set up to supervise the Party purge. It was not until the Fifth Congress of the metal workers' trade union in March 1922 that the Workers' Opposition hold on the union was broken. Once again this involved strengthening the position of those who opposed a further consolidation of the NEP. Congress delegates condemned the hopes, which Shliapnikov had encouraged 'for the reconstruction of the metal-working industry by transferring it to self-supply and adaptation to the market. For there was no question of

supporting the process of production in our enterprises by the exchange of goods on the market.'[49]

The crisis in the Communist Party at the end of 1920, and the introduction of the NEP, led to the formation of the only genuine communist breakaway groupings in the Soviet period. In no case did they involve any more than a few dozen serious activists, but they did sometimes manage to attract a following amongst workers. One of these groupings was the Worker and Peasant Socialist Party (RKSP), which first appeared at the end of 1920 with a degree of official approval, since it was allowed to run a club and journal. Its activity was confined almost entirely to the city district of Moscow where its leader, Paniushkin, was a well-known Communist Party activist. Little is known of the programme of the RKSP except that its main slogan was 'power to soviets, not parties' and a number of reports linked it to the Workers' Opposition. It is frequently claimed that it appealed to anti-Semitic sentiment and 'filthy, scandalous attacks against the leaders of our party', presumably Trotsky. The extent of the RKSP's following is difficult to ascertain but the slogan 'power to soviets, not parties' was clearly designed to appeal to the non-Party sentiments of many workers. Specifically, the RKSP managed to attract a number of supporters amongst tram workers after their strike in 1920. The leaders of the RKSP were arrested at the beginning of June 1921 and the party effectively suppressed.[50]

Meanwhile, in Perm, Miasnikov, who had a strong following in the Motovilikha works, was moving towards the position where he would be expelled from the Communist Party and establish his own breakaway organization, the Workers' Group. Miasnikov was a long-standing Bolshevik, with a reputation that had reached Lenin, but his ideas are best understood in the context of the Urals. In Soviet historiography Miasnikov is usually lumped together with the Workers' Opposition, and in February 1922 he joined many of their most important leaders in signing the Declaration of Twenty Two. However, he submitted his own platform in the trade union debate, which, at least superficially, contradicted the basic principles of the Workers' Opposition in proposing to reduce the role of trade unions to that of spreading Communist Party ideas in the international labour movement.[51]

Miasnikov called for the running of the economy to be handed over to soviets rather than the trade unions. He had rehearsed his ideas for the trade union debate in an article, 'Some Words on Comrade

Zinoviev's Theses', in December 1920. In this article he proposed that the spread of bureaucratic attitudes in the economic apparatus could only be avoided by reviving the soviets. To accomplish this he called for the VSNKh to take over all the main economic functions under the strict control of the VTsIK, with its provincial level bodies under the control of local soviets. At the enterprise level he proposed that 'in order to improve their participation in the life of their enterprise, delegates should be organized into a soviet of factory deputies (with more rights than a factory committee) participating in the management of them and connecting the departments of the local economic council by a tight unbroken link with the masses of the enterprise and their lives'.[52] In the context of the Urals, Miasnikov's proposals make greater sense. Factory committees as such did not exist in Urals enterprises. Instead, workers formed 'factory soviets', which not only performed the functions of a factory committee but also took over the administration of the territory surrounding the enterprise concerned.

Another aspect of the Revolution in the Urals, which is important for an understanding of Miasnikov's appeal, was the particularly strained relationship between workers and the enterprise owners and specialists in the region. In the winter of 1917–18 Urals workers threw out the old bosses and 'nationalized' their enterprises from below. Workers took management into their own hands in a way that contrasted with the more cautious actions of Moscow and Petrograd workers. Miasnikov appealed to the intense anti-specialist sentiments of Urals workers which was still strong in the Motovilikha works in 1920. In August a special meeting on the theme, 'The Intelligentsia and Soviet Power', was held to improve relations in the enterprise. Three hundred people, including representatives of the intelligentsia and the enterprise's 6000 workers, were present and a resolution was passed calling for solidarity between workers and 'bourgeois specialists'. Then, at the end of the month, the Motovilikha works Communist Party organization met to discuss the failure to fulfil its production plan and laid the blame not just on a shortage of engineers and highly qualified workers, but also on inadequate supervision by technical personnel. 'The meeting calls on members of the Communist Party fraction of the factory management to pay close attention to the work of the shop administration and their technical work, to make full use of this work, forcing technical personnel to apply all their knowledge to production and to pay serious attention to the mechanization of labour.'[53]

In the autumn of 1920 Miasnikov was transferred to Petrograd where his hostility to the 'bourgeoisie' appears to have been heightened by revulsion at the privileged lifestyle of leading communists. In the spring of 1921 he returned to Perm as the deputy director of the Motovilikha works and, in the summer, he issued a pamphlet, 'Sore Problems', which provoked a storm. In the words of Paul Avrich it was, 'A crushing indictment of the Communist Party leaders, their theories and methods, the memorandum demanded the abolition of the death penalty, the liquidation of bureaucratic forms of organization, and the transfer of industrial administration to producers' soviets; it counterposed revolutionary principle to the expedients promoted by the Central Committee.' He reportedly called for freedom of speech 'for monarchists to anarchists inclusive'.[54] The text of this pamphlet has not survived in a form that is available to historians and it is unlikely that Miasnikov would have left this freedom unqualified but the phrase made it easy for the party leadership, including Lenin who took a personal role in the affair, to accuse him of calling for freedom for the 'bourgeoisie'.

It took some months before Miasnikov's influence at the Motovilikha works could be neutralized and the scanty published reports support the contention that anti-specialist agitation was the basis of his support. In March–April the enterprise Communist Party organization was reported as being split into groups described as 'ours' and 'theirs', 'workers' and 'intellectuals', and 'rank-and-file' and 'officials'. The harsh economic climate in the metal-working industry provided a basis for Miasnikov's agitation. At the end of 1921 the director of the Motovilikha works had tried to guarantee a living wage for his work-force but the enterprise's resources were soon exhausted so that wages could not be paid at all.[55] In March 1922 Miasnikov was expelled from the Communist Party and in February 1923, along with other ex-communists, issued, 'The Manifesto of the Workers' Group of the Russian Communist Party', in which he suggested that the acronym 'NEP' should stand for the 'New Exploitation of the Proletariat'.[56]

Even more effective in suppressing political opposition amongst workers than the crushing of alternative political organizations was the breaking of the influence of enterprise-level activists. Dan described the intake of prisoners in the 'political section' of the Cheka prison in Petrograd in the summer of 1921.

> Along with small numbers of intellectuals and party members, hundreds of grey, non-Party workers passed through the prison. Amongst them were tram workers, workers from the Skorokhod works, the Obukhov works, the Putilov works and the Rechkin works – all the workers of Petersburg. Each time the Cheka began the same repulsive work of intimidating the masses and the identification of the 'ring-leaders' and stirring up of hatred against the 'intelligentsia'. In the end the majority of those arrested after about a month and a half imprisonment were released but from each haul a group were firmly imprisoned or sent to concentration camps.[57]

Many of the enterprises mentioned by Dan had built up traditions of opposition to the communists and had groups of worker activists and the mass redundancies that were taking place were used as an excuse to purge anti-communist workers from the workforce. An article in *Trud* commented on the positive political effect of cutting the workforce. In pinpointing those workers who had given support to anti-communist agitation and who should therefore be made redundant, it claimed that 'recently' large numbers of 'former small farmers and traders' had got into the enterprises. More convincingly, it also stressed the demoralizing effect of the large numbers of unoccupied workers on the shop-floor.[58] Enterprises that had been prominent in unrest were particularly hit by such purges. In Moscow the workforce on the troublesome Riazan–Uralsk railway had been dramatically reduced by July 1921. In the summer the workforce of the Dinamo works was reduced from 963 to 787. Most of those made redundant were described as 'loud-mouths'. During 1921 the workforce of the Goznak works was reduced from 4200 to 2700. Most of those made redundant were accused of breaking labour discipline.[59]

The effect on the willingness of workers to support opposition parties was predictable and was discussed in an article in *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* in the autumn of 1921. Menshevik representatives were still receiving a good welcome in many enterprises but workers preferred to elect a non-Party candidate, knowing that to elect a menshevik would lead to a loss of rations or sackings. Workers would attempt to show their political views in other ways. 'They put their soviet mandates together like this: the "political section" is confined to "support for soviet power" but, on the other hand, "free trade", a "living wage" and "free co-operatives", and many other things go in the "economic section", and sometimes only the demand that bribery be abolished and that local economic bodies did not steal.'[60]

Despite the heavy toll of redundancies, the ability to organize strikes did not disappear. Strike statistics for 1921 continue to provide only a very rough indicator of the true scale of industrial unrest and appear not to include the first half of the year. The figures for 1921 cover Leningrad, Moscow and twenty-six other provinces compared to the sixteen included in the 1920 totals. The overall increase in the number of reported strikes from 146 to 170 (with a decrease in the number of reported strikers from 135,442 to 86,268) is therefore not surprising. In Moscow province the number of recorded strikes rose from twenty-three to twenty-nine with a small reduction in the number of participants from 12,623 to 11,935. In Leningrad province there was a large reduction in the number of reported strikes from seventy-three to thirty-nine and the number of participants from 85,642 to 29,538. The proportion of economic to political strikes remained practically the same as for 1920, as did the proportion settled in the workers' favour. One area where a big change is registered, which is confirmed by specific examples in the summer and autumn of 1921, is the much greater average length of strike in 1921, with a much smaller proportion lasting one day or less and 31.8 per cent lasting more than three days compared to 13.1 per cent in 1920.[61]

The spring of 1922 was particularly difficult and Soviet Russia was hit by a new strike wave. In May it was reported that the failure to pay wages correctly, or pay wages at all in some areas, had led to conflicts in a whole series of districts. In Moscow, for example, there had been strikes in the Sokolnicheskii Mekhanicheskii works and the Gustav List works in mid-March over the non-payment of wages.[62] In July the textile workers trade union complained that the real value of wages in the textile industry were falling 'catastrophically' which was creating tension in enterprises. In April 1922 workers in the Tverskaia textile mill 'unexpectedly ... presented demands for improvements in their social and living conditions without informing the trade union'. A strike broke out which lasted three days.[63] Strikes continued to reflect enterprise traditions. Non-payment of wages in the main workshops of the Aleksandrovskaia railway led to discontent in July. 'From lip to lip a disquieting rumble is transmitted, "to the embankment". Slowly, unwillingly, one after another they leave work and in a crowd set off to the embankment, where they discuss the developing situation in groups.'[64]

The demands that workers at this time raised clearly show the differential impact of the NEP on the industrial workforce. Fortunately,

statistics now become more reliable and more detailed. In 1922 538 strikes with 197,022 participants were recorded. The movement gradually built up to a peak in May, June and July. The number of strikers in the metal-working and textile industries was practically identical. The vast majority of strikes were connected with discontent over wages but the majority of strikes in the metal-working industry, 54.5 per cent, were defensive in that they were provoked by the failure to pay wages, whilst in the textile industry, the equivalent figure was 38.7 per cent. In the textile industry 47.1 per cent of strikes were provoked by the inadequacy of wages, compared to only 25.2 per cent in the metal-working industry. If the textile workers' wages were lower than those of metal workers the fact that they received a proportion in kind made them better off and, whilst metal-working enterprises were faced with a complete exhaustion of resources, the Moscow provincial department of the textile workers' trade union was able to decide in March 1922, 'in connection with the start of unrest in the enterprises over the cost of living', to order supplementary payments to workers.[65] Not only had the basis for a spontaneous mass *volynka* been removed by the abolition of militarized labour, but there was no economic basis for common action between different groups of workers.

Conclusion

After the February–March *volynka*, the communists made immediate concessions to workers' demands. They quickly abolished the trade pickets and the subsequent abolition of the more oppressive aspects of War Communism labour policy, compulsory mass *subbotniki*, the tying of workers to an enterprise and the militarization of labour, undoubtedly eased tensions. Workers had advanced two main demands during the *volynka*: they had called for the lifting of the trade pickets and for an end to abuses in the food supply system. The first stage of the Communist Party response was to accede to these demands. The trade pickets were lifted, stocks of foodstuffs were released and certain anomalies in the food distribution system were abolished. Gradually, however, Communist Party policies began to develop in directions that appeared to set it on a collision course with workers. The introduction of the tax in kind and the legalization of trade in grain was bound to affect workers badly but there was no major political confrontation. It turned out that whilst some workers, such as metal workers and

transport workers, complained about the return of capitalism, other groups of workers, such as textile workers, were able to benefit from the growing peasant market. Paradoxically, whilst better rations had been a continual demand of workers during War Communism, their abolition removed a major cause of political conflict with the state.

On the surface the pre-conditions for another *volynka* continued to exist after the introduction of the NEP, but the introduction of the NEP, in all its different aspects, in food procurement and supply, and in industrial and labour policy, changed the nature of the relationship between the Communist Party regime and workers in a more fundamental way. In 1921–22 workers' lives began to be determined, to a considerable extent, by market forces rather than directly by Communist Party policies. This change reintroduced and reinforced divisions amongst different sections of the industrial workforce and created complexities in the workers' relationship with the regime. Now the communists could plausibly blame bad conditions on speculators and capitalists, against whom they were endeavouring to conduct a struggle. Of course, this approach gave rise to embarrassing contradictions but the effective suppression of opposition socialist parties and anti-communist activists in the enterprises ensured that labour protest was unlikely to errupt.

Conclusion

The impression is often given by historical literature on the revolutionary period in Russia that the country was set inevitably on the path to dictatorship. An examination of industrial unrest after the bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917 shows that the Revolution had brought to the surface resilient traditions of organization in society and had released tremendous forces in favour of greater popular participation that were not compatible with the dictatorship of the proletariat. The survival of the popular movement through the political repression and economic devastation of the Civil War testifies to its strength, but by early 1921 Russia was at a crossroads.

In early 1921 industrial unrest represented a serious political threat to the Soviet regime over three years after it had been established. From Ekaterinburg to Moscow, from Petrograd to Ekaterinoslavl, workers took to the streets, often in support of political slogans that called for the end of Communist Party rule. The crisis passed quite quickly. Although sailors in Kronstadt were in open revolt and soldiers in many of the strike centres showed themselves to be unreliable, the regime was able to muster enough forces to master the situation. Soldiers could be replaced by Chekists, officer cadets and other special units where Party members predominated. The key to the situation was the unity of the Communist Party. The growing industrial unrest which had preceded the early 1921 crisis had had a demoralizing effect on a Party which considered itself the authentic expression of the working class. Opposition groupings had emerged within the party which explicitly contrasted the interests and aspirations of workers with the policies of the Party. If the Party had split, and there was a feeling in the summer of 1921 that this was a danger, then the Soviet regime would have developed in a very different direction from the one it has followed.[1] As it turned out, a number of small break-away groupings did form, but the great mass of the Party stayed loyal to the leadership.

The Party also overcame the crisis because the *volynka* was the product of a combination of very specific circumstances that were unlikely to be repeated. In terms of food supplies, the appalling situation endured by workers in early 1921 was not substantially different from that of early 1919 and that of early 1922. Workers went on strike in 1919 and in 1922 but did not represent the political threat they did in 1921. This was not because of outside leadership. Activists from the opposition political parties were present during the *volynka* but they did not take the initiative. In the spring and early summer of 1918 an opposition workers' movement had developed which had involved the creation of new forms of organization and in which opposition socialist activists had been prominent but this was at a time when there were LSRs in the government, mensheviks in the VTsIK and opposition newspapers were being published and a repetition of the Conference Movement after two years of Red Terror was not a possibility. Repression broke up the opposition socialist parties organizationally and ideologically. The most uncompromising activists either ended up in prison or left Soviet Russia and the others tried to work as a legal opposition, avoiding confrontation with the communists. This did not prevent strikes and other forms of protest by workers becoming endemic in 1919 and 1920 but they remained at a local level.

Such localized action had long roots in Russia since permanent labour organizations had never been allowed to take root. This was not the massive revolutionary force that Marxists hoped would evolve, but neither was it, as they characterized it, a series of blind, elemental outbursts, an expression of peasant backwardness and political immaturity. Such localized unrest did not threaten the regime, either before or after the Revolution; it reflected too faithfully the deep divisions amongst industrial workers on the lines of geography, urbanization, skill, sex, generation, social origin and so on, to do that. At first the policies of the Soviet government in the fields of rations and wages, which upset accepted differentials, added to these divisions. None the less, these traditions continued to provide the basis on which workers could resist, at the enterprise or shop-floor, measures that contradicted their aspirations. Localized resistance kept alive the possibility of larger-scale protest. Shop-floor sub-cultures and hierarchies which provided the values and structures on which resistance could be organized proved remarkably resilient and enterprises developed traditions of opposition to the communists.

Communist Party labour policies after 1918 put the possibility of some form of conflict between the regime and workers on the agenda. They reintroduced the conventional styles of Russian management that workers had rebelled against in 1917 and invented new ones, of a moral or comradely type, such as *subbotniki* and labour disciplinary courts, and of a military type, such as Committees for Labour Conscription, to raise productivity. Both led to greater use of coercion. These policies not only contradicted the aspirations that the bolsheviks had encouraged in 1917, they were also ineffective and were applied with an ideological determination which blinded them to this. The ineffectiveness of these often draconian policies in 1919 and much of 1920 lessened the potential for mass, politicized industrial unrest to develop but, at the same time, the potential seriousness of any confrontation grew. In theory, the state supplied rations that should have covered the bulk, if not all, of a worker's food supply needs; in practice, they barely made up half and workers had to find their own sources of supply.

In early 1921 a situation developed where this potential for mass confrontation, based on lively traditions of localized resistance and unpopular and unreliable polices, was released. The end of the Civil War found the Communist Party gripped by utopianism. It was widely believed that a communist society was within grasp but this was at a time when the country was in a state of the most extreme devastation. There was a determined clamp-down on the unofficial economy and a large programme of economic expansion was begun. These plans were completely unrealistic and the suppression of the unofficial economy meant that the target of the unrest that now broke out throughout the industrial workforce was the bolshevik dictatorship. The demands raised by workers showed that their economic and political aspirations had changed little since 1917. Workers' economic demands centred on food supply and entailed the abolition of the most oppressive controls, in the form of the trade pickets and the reform of the supply apparatus. The experience of three years of dictatorhip meant that workers readily supported calls for greater civil and democratic rights, and sometimes resolutions that implied the end of Communist Party rule.

Since mass, politicized protest had developed only as the result of very specific circumstances, it could be easily defused. Concessions were made immediately to workers' economic demands. Stocks of

foodstuffs were distributed, the trade pickets were lifted, certain anomalies in the rationing system were dealt with and some of the more draconian measures of labour discipline were abolished. Repression dealt with any more determined centres of opposition. Industrial unrest soon lost its mass, politicized character. Greater political repression was one factor but, paradoxically, some of the consequences of the NEP, the abolition of rations and mass redundancies, which were in direct conflict with workers' aspirations, reinforced this process by reintroducing divisions amongst different groups of workers and defusing confrontation with the state. The dissatisfaction of workers with the NEP became one aspect of that unstable compromise.

Notes

1. The intensification of war communism

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2. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti* (Moscow 1964–83), vol. 8.
3. *Pravda*, 17 December 1919, p. 1.
4. *Pravda*, 22 January 1920, p. 1.
5. *IX s'ezd RKP(b), mart-aprel' 1920 goda: protokoly* (Moscow 1972), pp. 404–17.
6. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, p. 492.
7. Goldman, E., *My Disillusionment in Russia* (London 1923), pp. 12 and 82.
8. *Tretii vserossiiskii s'ezd professional'nykh soiuzov 6–18 aprelia 1920 goda stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow 1921), p. 28.
9. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, p. 404.
10. *Tretii vserossiiskii s'ezd professional'nykh soiuzov*, pp. 15 and 28.
11. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, pp. 95–6 and, p. 405.
12. *Tretii vserossiiskii s'ezd professional'nykh soiuzov*, p. 12.
13. Carr, E. H., *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917–21* (London 1966), vol. 2, pp. 369–71; *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, pp. 545–6.
14. Channon, J., 'Trotsky, the Peasants and Economic Policy: A Comment' in *Economy and Society*, vol. 14 (4), pp. 516–18.
15. *VSRM v rezoliutsiiakh i postanovleniiakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK, 1907–1925* (Moscow 1927), p. 281.
16. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, pp. 553–8.
17. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, p. 540; *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 7, p. 382.
18. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 8, p. 131.
19. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, pp. 414, 417 and 422–3; *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 8, p. 21.
20. *Tretii vserossiiskii s'ezd professional'nykh soiuzov*, p. 26.
21. Knei-Paz, B., *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky* (Oxford 1978), pp. 260–9; *Tretii vserossiiskii s'ezd professional'nykh soiuzov*, pp. 94–5.
22. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, p. 91.
23. *Pravda*, 1 January 1920, p. 1; *Gudok*, 19 June 1920, p. 2.
24. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, p. 138; *Tretii vserossiiskii s'ezd professional'nykh soiuzov*, p. 90.
25. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, pp. 533–8; Haimson, L., ed., *The Mensheviks – From the Revolution of 1917 to the Second World War* (Chicago 1974), p. 233.
26. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, pp. 406, 415 and 554–6.
27. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 7, pp. 172–5.
28. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 8, p. 98.

29. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 7, p. 199.

30. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, pp. 413–14; Service, R., *The Bolshevik Party in Revolution* (London 1979), p. 136. See Sakwa, R., *Soviet Communists in Power* (London 1987), pp. 220–2 for the tensions created in the Moscow Communist Party organizations by the introduction of political departments on the railways.

31. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, p. 94.

32. *Pravda*, 10 January 1920, p. 1.

33. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, pp. 562–5.

34. *Pravda*, 20 March 1920, p. 2.

35. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, p. 162.

36. *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, pp. 532 and 548–9.

37. Goldman, E., *Living My Life* (New York 1970), p. 740; Leggett, G., *The Cheka: Lenin's Political Police. The All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combatting Counter-Revolution and Sabotage (Dec. 1917 to Feb. 1922)* (Oxford 1981), p. 184.

38. *Tretii vserossiiskii s'ezd professional'nykh soiuzov*, pp. 8–9.

39. Gusev, K. V., *Partiia eserov: ot melko-burzhuazhnogo revoliutsionarizma k kontrevoliutsii* (Moscow 1975), p. 360.

40. Volin, S., *Deiatel'nost' menshevikov v profsoiuziakh pri sovetskoi vlasti* (New York 1962), pp. 69–71; Haimson, L., ed., *The Mensheviks*, p. 215.

41. Haimson, L., ed., *The Mensheviks*, p. 220; *Kommunisticheskii trud*, 30 April 1920, p. 2.

42. *Oborona revoliutsii i sotsial-demokatii* (Moscow 1920), pp. 13 and 16.

43. Trotskii, V. V. and Demidov, A. D., eds, *1920 god v srednevolzhskom krae. Khronika sobytii* (Samara 1934), pp. 16, 38 and 54.

44. *Pravda*, 26 March 1920, pp. 1–2. At the XII Party Conference in the summer of 1922 Osinskii was accused of underestimating the SR threat and 'liberalism'. *XII konferentsiia RKP(b) 4–7 avg 1922 g* (Moscow 1922) Biulleten' No. 2, p. 87, Biulleten' No. 3, pp. 3, 4 and 10.

45. *Kommunar*, 14 March 1920, p. 4 and 20 March 1920, p. 2.

46. *Pravda*, 26 March 1920, pp. 1–2; *Kommunar*, 20 March 1920, p. 2.

47. *Kommunar*, 20 March 1920, p. 2, 27 March 1920, p. 2, 18 April 1920, p. 3 and 24 April 1920, p. 2.

48. *Pravda*, 18 February 1920, p. 1, 26 February 1920, p. 2, 27 February 1920, p. 1 and 7 March 1920, p. 2.

49. Garvi, P. A., *Professional'nye soiuzy v Rossii 1917–21* (New York 1958), p. 50; Volin, S., *Deiatel'nost' menshevikov*, p. 26 and 91; Sakwa, R., *Soviet Communists in Power*, p. 74; *Pravda*, 7 November 1920, p. 8.

50. Haimson, L., ed., *The Mensheviks*, p. 441; *Tretii vserossiiskii s'ezd professional'nykh soiuzov*, p. 43.

51. *Gornorabochii*, September 1920, p. 7.

52. *Iz istorii moskovskoi chrezvychainoi komissii 1918–22. Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow 1978), p. 224; *Gudok*, 15 June 1920, p. 4.

53. Gogolevskii, A. V., *Petrogradskii sovet v gody grazhdnaskoi voiny* (Leningrad 1982), p. 56; *Pravda*, 6 July 1920, p. 1.

54. *Pravda*, 1 January 1920, p. 2; *Oborona revoliutsii*, p. 21.

55. *Pravda*, 26 March 1920, pp. 1–2; Haimson, L., ed., *The Mensheviks*, p. 211.

56. *Tretii vserossiiskii s'ezd professional'nykh soiuzov*, p. 25.

57. *Pravda*, 27 May 1920, p. 2 and 11 June 1920, p. 2; *Kommunisticheskii trud*, 27 May 1920, p. 3 and 10 June 1920, p. 3.

58. *Pravda*, 12 March 1920, p. 1; *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, p. 419.

59. *Pravda*, 12 March 1920, p. 1; *IX s'ezd RKP(b)*, pp. 231 and 239–40. Later Riazanov wrote that an early Central Committee draft resolution to introduce political departments into all trade unions was withdrawn on the eve of the congress. Riazanov, D., *Zadachi professional'nykh soiuzov do i v epokhu diktatury proletariata* (Moscow 1922), p. 60.

60. *Gudok*, 13 July 1920, p. 3, 14 July 1920, p. 2 and 17 July 1920, p. 3.

61. *Gudok*, 18 July 1920, p. 1, 20 July 1920, p. 2, 21 July 1920, p. 4, 22 July 1920, p. 2 and 30 July 1920, p. 2.

62. Carr, E. H., *The Bolshevik Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 222; *Gudok*, 10 September 1920, p. 3.

63. *Tretii vserossiiskii s'ezd professional'nykh soiuzov*, pp. 68 and 99.

64. *VSRM v rezoliutsiiakh i postanovleniiakh*, p. 317.

65. *Tekstil'shchik* (1–2) 1920, p. 9.

66. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 10, p. 272; *Metallist* (August–September) 1920 p. 20.

67. *Tekstil'shchik* (June) 1920, p. 21.

68. *Kommunar*, 26 February 1920, p. 3 and 3 June 1920, p. 3.

69. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 7, p. 166.

70. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 7, p. 198;, vol. 8, pp. 196–200.

71. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 7, p. 325; *Pravda*, 18 May 1920, p. 2.

72. *Ural'skii rabochii*, 4 March 1920, p. 1; *Pravda*, 20 June 1920, p. 2.

73. *Gudok*, 17 July 1920, p. 1 and 28 July 1920, p. 4.

74. *Kommunisticheskii trud*, 16 April 1920, p. 3 and 9 May 1920, p. 3.

75. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 6, p. 270;, vol. 7, p. 365.

76. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 7, p. 102; *Iz istorii vserossiiskoi chrezvychainoi komissii 1917–21gg. Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow 1958), p. 371.

77. *Pravda*, 22 July 1920, p. 3.

78. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 7, p. 172.

79. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 8, pp. 361–4.

80. Dmitrienko, V., P., 'Nekotorye itogi obobshchestvleniia tovoborota v 1917–20 gg' in *Istoricheskie zapiski* (1972) 79, pp. 228 and 237.

81. *Istoriia zavoda 'Dinamo'* (Moscow 1964), p. 48.

82. *Iz istorii vserossiiskoi chrezvychainoi komissii 1917–1921 gg. Sbornik dokumnetov* (Moscow 1958), p. 363; *Iz istorii moskovskoi chrezvychainoi komissii 1918–1922. Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow 1978), pp. 250 and 259.

83. Goldman, E., *Living My Life*, p. 753; Dan, F., *Dva goda skitanii* (Berlin 1922), p. 170.

84. *Iz istorii moskovskoi chrezvychainoi komissii*, pp. 255–8.

85. In his history of the Cheka, Leggett has read too much into the sources to dramatize the presumed execution of Petrograd strikers in 1919. Leggett, G., *The Cheka*, p. 313; Dukes, Sir, P., *The Story of 'ST25'* (London 1938), pp. 178–9 and 227.

86. *Iz istorii vserossiiskoi chrezvychainoi komissii*, pp. 417–18.

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88. *Kommuna*, 6 January 1921, p. 2.

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2. The intensification of industrial unrest

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